

So thats how it is?

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Summary: A SpartanIII must fight alongside old enemies to ensure the survival of Humanity and the fall of the Covenant.

1. So much can happen on an afternoon jog

****So That's how it is?****

Disclaimer: I don't own Halo.

****A/N: This begins just before the start of the Covenant Civil war and memories are in Italics.****

****Chapter 1****

****So much can happen on an afternoon jog****

Halo Installation-05

Sentinel Wall of the Quarantine Zone

The Ninth Age of Reclamation

Wyyyyyaaaaaaahhhh

Spartan-183, Kim ignored the wail of the combat form as its body was shredded in a hail of bullets.

It had been over an hour and I still haven't found a way into the Quarantine Zone. How could I have gotten so lost? I need to make it through the zone, and into the Library, she thought, _link up with Commander Keyes and the rest of the marines to retrieve the Index_. As she continued her search through the Forerunner construct, she heard a low whine coming from behind, and watched a small maintenance drone fly out of a vent and down the hall. _Couldn't hurt to follow it,_ she thought as she cased it through the room. It sped ahead of her until it popped open a large plug, revealing a long shaft and

flew down a chute. "Here we go" she sprinted to the plug that covered the chute when a metal grating crashed in front of it with a "clang! Infection Forms spilled out in a waterfall of crawling death as she drew her SMG.

She slid underneath them and dropped down the chute before them. Clicking the safety off, she hosed them with the bullets from her last clip. "Damn!" she exclaimed dropping the now useless gun watching it slide next to her. A lot of marines loved the SMG and called it the 'bullet hose', but in Kim 's eyes she'd seen too many good soldiers killed by enraged D-lites who simply had their shields nicked by them because of its lack of stopping power. The Spartan pushed the angry thoughts out of her mind as she saw the ending of the chute appear.

She had originally been sent with three squads of marines to explore the Wall around the Quarantine Zone. Their task was to shut down the power core and lower the containment field around the Library so Commander Keyes could deploy her marines into the Quarantine zone. They had made their way down through the first sections of the wall with only minor resistance from a few Sentinels and lost Grunts. It was when they made their way to one of the outer sections of the Wall close by the power core that things went wrong...

After they entered the room it started to vibrate with the whir of machinery, as the doors around them locked shut the wall that had shielded them from the outside slid open as the floor they were on revealed itself to be a gondola and dropped down by a dozen feet. The wall finished opening when the gondola stopped its decent and hovered across the large expanse between the gaps in the outer wall of the Quarantine zone to an opening on the other side. _

Kim and the marines around her looked up to see the containment field surrounding the Library slowly receded across the Wall. Searching the sky for an answer to its de-activation, their curiosity was answered by the low whine of a Phantom's engines as it sped over them to a gondola on the far side. As the Phantom flew above it Kim could make out the form of a lone Elite in strange ceremonial armor standing below the Phantom. Upon seeing him her trigger finger began to itch with hatred as images of her fellow Spartans being slaughtered on the training grounds of Reach ran through her mind, filling her with anger and remorse. She was about to open fire when she was snapped out of her blood lust by the form of a large Sentinel coming out of the Inner Wall. It was big, bigger than any Sentinel she had seen before, with two large clamps and shields like a Jackal in front. It hovered in front of the Phantom and launched a salvo of rockets at it. The Phantom veered from side to side and began to ascend as the mortars hit its hull, seeing her chance Kim took aim at the Elite. Unfortunately for her fate was kind to the Arbiter as the wreckage from the destroyed Sentinel Major blocked him from her line of sight._

She cursed her slow reflexes as their gondola docked inside of the wall. The platform locked itself in place as doors on all sides of them opened up, releasing a torrent of Flood and Sentinels. She and the marines formed what defense they could, trying to get the sentinels in between them and the parasite. In the end they were overwhelmed by the sheer number of Flood. "Klaus, Juan, focus your fire on Flood, if you don't shoot the sentinels they'll ignore you!" she shouted. _

"_But that things still got Peter!" shouted Klaus, Kim turned to watch "Peter" land in front of him, impaling him with a tentacle arm while an infection form clamped on to Juan, yellow pustules erupting through his armor. Thinking frantically as she was becoming surrounded Kim picked up the Beam rifle off a destroyed Sentinel and began to cut the vents they were coming from, while the flood kept the machines distracted. As the Flood finished off the last of the Sentinels she turned on the people that had once been here comrades, put a bullet into the infection form of every one of them, killing the marines but also releasing them from the parasite._

"And so here I am", she thought as the chute opened up and dropped her into a new room, "I failed to keep my marines alive and now have to fight my way out of this hell".

She hit the ground below the chute and found herself in one of the outer sections of the Wall that was open to the Quarantine zone._ Good_, she thought as she looked out upon the snowy fields below, "I'm almost out of this place". She began to search the room for another chute when she came upon a dead Elite still clutching onto a Battle Rifle. "I hope you don't mind if I borrow this", she said as she pried the gun out of its hands. Searching his body for clips an interesting thought crossed her mind, "_How many humans has he killed? And in his final moments his only companion was this_". Wondering where she should head next she noticed the light given off by a plug down the corridor. "Well I hate to leave you like this", popping in a new clip, "But a rolling stone gathers no moss". As she headed down the corridor towards the piston on the far side she heard another blood curdling scream. "Gotta pick up the pace" she sighed as she started to sprint down the hall. A groan of metal could be heard in the ceiling above, "To late"â€|.

Combat forms burst out of the metal vents in the ceiling, pursuing her in a hunger driven frenzy. She whipped around and unloaded her Battle Rifle into the carrier forms. They fell over as their bodies expanded and blew apart, punching a hole in the wall of Flood. Dropping the first line was easy, then the second, but for every combat form she killed two more would take its place as infection forms took control of the fallen. She reached toward her ammunition pouch for another rifle clip only to find it a figment of her imagination. "Of all the times to run out of ammo, why couldn't that split lip have some more clips on him?". Cursing the dead Elite she drew out her only other weapon, an old M6D pistol. She had managed to smuggle this little treasure on board the In Amber Clad when she was called out of New Mombasa, there was no way she was going to use one of those pebble-throwing SMGs on anything other than those little infection forms, and unlike the M6C it had enough power in it to drop a Combat form without breaking a sweat.

She picked her first target and shot out the parasite of the combat form, the late Private Gerald as she remembered, and kept firing until her gun ran dry. Picking up on her moment of weakness, one of the Elite combat forms lunged forward, knocking the gun out of her hand. It whipped back around for a second time and slammed her against the side wall.

The Combat form lifted its arm up once more to smash in the Spartans head when she swept it from its feet. She unsheathed her combat knife to kill the creature, plunging it into its chest cavity. The

infection form exploded with a noticeable 'pop' as she withdrew her knife from its body. She began to get to her feet when three more combat forms jumped at her. She dodged the first two but the third Combat lashed out and threw her to the floor. Dropping the knife as she hit the ground, she tried to get up when the hoof of the Elite combat form forced her back down.

"No! she thought, I will not be turned into one of these horrible freaks!", she pulled down the combat form, using the momentum to plunge her hands into its chest, ripping out the infection with her own hands. Adrenalin pumping through her, Kim lunged for the second one, taking it to ground as more flood had jumped down from the overhead ledge and where already on top of her. They lashed out at her forgetting the use of their weapons as hunger consumed them. Alarms blared in her suit warning her that her armor was going failing under the constant attack.

She fought against the Flood but her struggle was useless against their onslaught. Becoming frustrated because they couldn't crack open their foods shell, a pheromonal message was sent to lift their arms in unison for the killing blow. Sensing it was the end Kim began to activate the suits self-destruct when a booming voice yelled out "Cleansing Flame!", and a blue sun appeared above her.

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Rano' Zukanomee listened to the transmission again with disbelief. "How could it be sir?" he questioned. "How could it be that the mighty Arbiter would succumb to the parasite just before he reached the Sacred Icon? Surely it must be a lie!". The Spec Ops team had just cleansed a section of the Sentinel Wall when the order was given to rally in the Quarantine zone. The Sacred Icon was retrieved, the Great Journey was nigh, even if it would be ushered in by the Jiralhanae.

I don't know Rano'" replied the Spec Ops leader, turning away from spectacular sight of the library he faced Rano. "What I do know is that the Commander has ordered us back into the Quarantine Zone for immediate extraction". Rano nodded in agreement with his leader, "Come Fulsa'", he said gesturing to the minor Spec Ops Sangheili, "we're leaving the Wall".

"Yes sir", replied Fulsa' Zaranomee as he moved from his position covering the bend of the corridor.

"If you don't mind me asking sir what where you two talking about?" questioned Fulsa' as he sprinted to his commander Isin' Noslomee and the Veteran Spec Ops Rano' Zukanomee. "The Sacred Icon has been retrieved Fulsa' and we have been ordered to head into the Quarantine zone for extraction but...". "But what sir?" questioned the young soldier. "Unfortunately the Arbiter has been killed by the parasite before he could reach the Icon, Tartarus and his brutes made the final advance and secured it".

"What?" exclaimed Fulsa'. "That's impossible sir, I myself had fought by the Arbiter's side on the Forerunner research facility. If you had seen how he had slew the Flood and those heretics you would know that it's not possible for him to be killed by just the parasite". Fulsa's mind raced with the possibilities of how the Arbiter could have died and came with one conclusion. "The Jiralhanae!" he shouted, "That

smelly primate chieftain must have conspired to kill the Arbiter so he could recover the Sacred Icon and win his disrespectful race even more favor with the Prophets". "Oh how they will pay for their treachery!" yelled Fulsa' as he drew his plasma sword.

Isin' put a hand on Fulsa's shoulder to try and calm down the young Sangheili. He was either far too clever, or too headstrong for his own good thought the commander. "Listen Fulsa', I don't like the Jiralhanae any more than you do" said Isin' as his voice turned hard. "But this is neither the time nor the place to plot an extermination of the beasts, which I might also add would be heresy. The only thing we should be concerned with is making it out of here alive, not trying to uncover some coup against us, and as your superior I'll remind you that a drawn weapon, is a weapon that demands blood, don't forget that".

Fulsa' looked down and mumbled a low "yes sir" as he put away his sword and drew back out his carbine. Rano nodded, "That's a good soldier and do not fret Fulsa', I will inquire with the Commander and the warriors that had accompanied the Arbiter into the Library about how he died". The minor Sangheili gave a nod of content to his leader as they headed down the ramp to the lower levels.

They had made their way through the Wall without meeting much resistance from the parasite or the holy warriors of the sacred rings. Taking this rare moment of peace Fulsa' began to think about the humans. He was always taught to try and think like his enemies. The more he understood them the more easily they would fall. Yes they were a lowly affront to the gods but they still demanded study. They were weak and inferior creatures but at least the humans had fought with honor and dignity, sacrificing their own lives to protect what few planets they still had, in his eyes that made them at least better than the Jiralhanae.

"_Well_", he thought "_all those except the Demons_"! Fulsa's blood boiled as the memory began to play through his mind. He bit down on his upper mandibles to suppress the rage and pain he felt whenever the subject of the Demons went through his mind. "_No, I cannot let those memories control me_", he thought_", "I must stay battle ready and not let my mind be clouded by hate_".

Returning to his former alertness Fulsa' began to notice the carnage that had surrounded them. There were bodies everywhere and the stench of death had been overpowering. "What happened here?" asked Rano', crouching low as he inspected the body of a dead parasite, "Surely no human could have done this".

"Perhaps it was the Arbiter who killed them?" suggested Fulsa', the false hope of his youth betraying him.

"No" spoke Isin' as he examined the other combat forms, "The Arbiter didn't go through this section of the wall. Besides these kills are fresh, if the Arbiter had went through here the parasite would have already taken control of these bodies".

"Then it must have been the Demon" he whispered Rano' as he stood up away from the corpse. "Impossible!" cried Fulsa', "The Demon died after it killed the Prophet of Regret".

"So far as we know" replied Rano' in a hushed voice, "Anyways Fulsa',

you more than anyone else should know that there are more than one."

As if on cue the noise of human gunfire and the screech of the parasite filled the hall. "Come warriors the field of battle calls" cried Isin' as he and the others leaped down the chute eager for the taste of combat. They hit the ground with their guns at the ready in case of an ambush. Seeing it was clear they ran down the new corridor to where the fight was taking place. As they made their way through the walls became coated with flood gore, the scent in the air was one of smoke and death. Caught up in the thrill of combat, Fulsa' ran ahead drawing his sword. Isin' and Rano' stopped knowing that it was foolish to charge straight into such a frantic situation, deciding to give Fulsa' cover fire with their carbines to keep the parasite from getting at his flanks. Half way to the parasite Fulsa' primed a grenade and tossed it into the mass of flesh yelling a mighty "Cleansing Flame!".

The grenade exploded in a blinding ball of plasma as Fulsa' leaped onto the first combat form, plunging his sword in it. Kicking off of its body as it hit the ground he rolled in front two combat forms. He dodged their attack and feinted to the right before he lunged at the parasite to his left. His sword impaled the parasite's chest; a quick upswing cleaved it in two with the hiss of cauterized flesh. As the parasite fell, Fulsa' ducked to avoid the tentacle of the other combat form and prepared to strike it down as three streams of green light pierced its chest cavity. Knowing that he was not alone Fulsa' charged down the middle towards the center as the flood to the left and right fell to the fire of his comrades carbines.

Soon the flood began to thin and after the last combat forms life was extinguished with a heavy hoof to the chest Fulsa' looked around at his handy work. It was both horrible yet satisfying to see the bodies of so many killed parasites, yet it saddened him to have killed many who had once been his brothers. At least now their spirits were free to walk the great journey.

He began to head back to the others when he noticed a small movement out of the corner of his eye. Turning around he saw something stirring underneath a pile of bodies, readying his sword Fulsa' slowly approached the mass. When he was a few feet from the pile one of the bodies launched itself at him, thinking quickly Fulsa' side stepped and sliced it as it flew by. He began to turn around when he was kicked to the ground by a heavily booted foot.

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Kim brought her foot down on the Elite before it could roll away.

Wham!

The Elites shields flared under the pressure of her boot, she spun around and brought her foot up for a staple kick to its face when it was caught in the air. She tumbled backward as her leg was pulled up and a hoof struck her support leg. Kim twisted as she fell, hitting the ground face up as the Elite lunged forward. Timing it just right she curled up and caught him in the chest with a swift kick.

The Elite reeled backward in surprise as Kim righted herself and

threw a left hook. The Elite blocked her punch and countered with a palm to her faceplate. He struck home as Kim's shields died and her head whipped back. Taking the opportunity the Elite's hand curled around her neck, bringing her down with a knee to the face.

In one quick movement it pushed Kim down to the ground and brought its knee down on her elbow, grabbing her wrist and yanking up. The Monster yelled a triumphant battle cry as it began to bend her arm in an unnatural angle.

"It was not wise to challenge me Demon, now I shall have my vengeance and bring honor to my Clan!" it yelled as two more Elites jogged forward with their carbines shouldered. "Look brothers and be witness to my prowess, for I have taken down the Demon!"

"Fulsa' release the Demon and get away now!" yelled what appeared to be the commanding officer as he primed a grenade.

"Huh? No! I will do not such... w-what is that!"

"What is going on?", thought the Spartan as her arm was released. She looked up and saw the elites running backwards and firing into the gloom of the corridor. The grenade exploded in a blinding flash of plasma. The auto dampers in her helmet shielded her eyes from the flash as it illuminated the hall and revealed the new threat.

2. Meet the Minotaur

Disclaimer: I don't own the Halo books or the game

So That's how it is?

Chapter 2

Meet the Minotaur

Delta-Halo installation

Wall of the Quarantine Zone

The Ninth Age of Reclamation

We have sensed the prey, we know that it is here. How fortunate we are to have Reclaimers step into our domain. For too long we have been sealed away inside this prison, always starving but never knowing the sweet release of death, forced to suffer our own immortality.

Now we are free.

Now we can feed and satisfy our hunger.

No mere Reclaimer is going to stop us.

It may have fought hard and well, slaughtering many of our brothers, but its armor and weapons cannot manage us in time. Smiling inward with glee we watch as it grows frantic, is disarmed and brought down. Close, oh how close are my brothers to the prey that they are driven into a frenzy to satisfy their hunger.

"Cleansing flame!"

Hmmm, what's this? The other species, the ones that released us from our frozen prison and have made such fine meals have come.

A blue orb fly's over their heads. "Move brothers move! You will be killed" but they do not listen, intent on consuming such a strong host that they ignore the threat that looms over their heads.

An explosion rips above them.

Forerunners be damned! No matter, there are more of us, a few dead drones compared to our ever growing ranks is nothing to be concerned over.

Yet what is this?

Instead of helping the very Reclaimer they had saved, the prey is now fighting it. Why? Our instincts tell us to strike while they are fighting and weak, but still our minds are curious, why?

_ "Maybe we should ask our 'guests' why the prey have not only been fighting us but the Reclaimers across the ring" came the voice of their collectives leader._

_ "Yes they shall hold the answer leader" _

Inside of the hosts bodies a hole is opened up into the little prison that hold their minds.

_ "Hmmm, it seems the Reclaimer and the two prey are fighting again, maybe there is a war between them?" _

_ "Maybe brother" _

_ "...and that's why there's no 'Great Journey!' you split-lipped bastards, your just setting yourselves up to die!" _

_ "Devil human! If I had arms you would be torn to pieces long ago!" _

_ "Yah well yeh don't so what ya gonna do about it asswipe?" _

_ "Silence all of you, the only reason why we keep your minds intact is for information! But if you don't stop arguing we will do away with you!._

_ Silence filled the prison as they gave their captor their attention._

_ "Now tell us why are these two are fighting" called and unseen voice as an image of the Reclaimer and the prey fighting appeared._

_ "Because these devil's, much like you, are an affront to the gods and deserve nothing but death!" _

_ "Is that the Chief, I knew he survived, now you guys are gonna get

it!"_

"So your species is at war? Interesting..."

"Hey where are you guys going?" exclaimed the Reclaimer as their prison sealed shut.

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Out of the darkness it came. Surrounded by an aura of death its very sight sent waves of fear through Fulsa's frame as it approached. Shuffling towards them on two stalk like legs that appeared to be too small to hold up its body it had an overall strange appearance. Most floods normally just mutated the bodies of its hosts upon infection, but this one seems to be several combat forms fused together to make one large being. As it began to draw near its many sensory stalks vibrated and it let out an ear shattering screech.

Knocked out of his bewilderment Fulsa' jumped off of the Demon. "_How can I take down such a beast?", _he thought as he ran into the cover of a metal out cropping in the hallway, leaving the Demon for the parasite. Fulsa' desperately searched around him for a weapon, realizing he had dropped them during his grapple with the demon. _"Damn! I must retreat!"_

He reached down to activate his camouflage. Preparing to make a break for his comrades, he caught his reflection on the metal floor. "Accursed Demon! It wasn't enough that I couldn't kill it, but it damaged my camouflage as well."

Thump... Thump... Thump...

Panic began to spread through him as it drew near. His comrades were laying down fire, but it was little use and the beast would inevitably go for the weaker prey...

Him.

"I shall go with honor", he bellowed, "May I walk with my father and brothers on the path to salvation."

Muttering a small prayer to prepare himself for the afterlife he leaped from behind his cover, and rolled in front of the beast curling into a crouching position. Fulsa' launched himself at its center of mass, intent on ripping out the infection forms within when he was brutally knocked out of the way by its main tentacle's into a hallway behind it.

Sparks flying off his armor as he skidded down the hall Fulsa' 'stopped' himself by slamming into a green wall. His head pounded as he struggled to get rid of the blurriness in his vision. He started to cough up blood when the green wall wrapped a hand around his mandibles.

Fulsa' tried moving his mouth and bite down on the attacker to free himself from the strangle hold when the green wall spoke.

"Shhhhh, If you keep it quite split-lip that thing will ignore us and we might be able to get out of here".

Fulsa' looked up to see the Demon come into focus. He drove his elbow into it's faceplate, not doing much damaged but loosening its hold on him. He freed himself and charged the surprised Demon. Grabbing its arm and neck he forced it up against the wall with all his might.

"Listen" it hissed, "If we work together then we can kill that Flood and get out of here alive."

"I would sooner die by the parasite than ask for help from your kind! You Demons are a cowardly race that deserves nothing better than a slow agonizing death that will be brought on by us! We will..."

The sound of explosions cut him short.

Fulsa' turned around as he heard the detonation of grenades." _The Parasite is attacking the commander and Rano" _he thought," _I must help them, even if it means sparing the Demonâ€¦ for now"._

He turned back to the Demon pinned to the wall and released it, "You are a very lucky Demon, if it weren't for my comrades demanding my assistance you would be dead!" he called out as he ran to their aid.

Running madly at the beast while its back was turned to him, using his powerful legs he jumped onto it and grabbed hold of the sensory stalks in the center.

The Juggernaut screamed in anguish as Fulsa' tried to pull out the infection form. Yet try as he might he couldn't find one. It's reaction was swift as Fulsa' was sent flying to his squad.

Fighting the urge to blackout he slide down the wall he again 'stopped' himself with. He could feel a sharp pain biting into his side, "_probably some broken ribs_" he thought as the Juggernaut shuffled towards them. Isin began to pull him up when a green blur darted out of the hall and at the Juggernaut.

"Ha" cried out Rano, "You may have bested Fulsa' but now the Demon is upon you beast!"

Fulsa' let out a low growl of anger at Rano, "Rano, do you really think the Demon to be better than me?" he questioned as he was righted.

"It is after all the Demon".

"Then I will show you who is superior", grabbing a metal knife on the floor he rushed at the parasite while it was being distracted.

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From behind the Juggernaut, Kim took the bested elites spot on its back. She got a firm foothold by kicking into its soft body and was busy dodging tentacles when the elite jumped in front of her.

"This is how you deal with the parasite", in one swift motion he stabbed into the Juggernaut searching for the infection forms yet

they eluded him still. In anger the Juggernaut smashed into the wall. Fulsa' and Kim fell to its feet as the semi blinded beast shook them off. Fulsa' rolled over in time to see the creature large hoof rise over him. Closing his eyes, he was surprised to feel himself lifted onto his feet instead of being whisked to paradise.

Kim grabbed the elite before it could be crushed, pulling it to its feet, running towards its comrades the monster starred at her with a look of surprise and furry. "Let's not talk about this right now, okay?" Kim tried to reason with it, "The sooner we kill it, the sooner we can kill each other". They ran past the other two elites as they turned to sprint beside them, the elite in the lighter colored armor responded "A fine plan demon, I believe this flood form is a 'pure' form, one that doesn't rely on a host".

"Then how do we kill it?" inquired the third elite.

"With a lot of explosions" replied what appeared to be the commanding elite. "Demon, Rano and myself will set charges on the lowest level while you and Fulsa' will take the long way through to distract the parasite".

"Why must I be paired with the Demon?" complained Kim's attacker.

"Don't think I haven't noticed the markings you've made on the walls, and while most Commanders would have broken your mandibles for defiling these relics, I saw the value in you marking our way". Fulsa's mandibles went slack as he was confronted with his vandalism. "And why should I trust zippy over here not to leave me for dead?" piped up Kim. "Because" replied the elder elite, "You're the one who will be holding the detonator, if Fulsa' takes it upon himself to disregard my direct orders, not only will he pay the price but so will we all, is that understood?"

"Yes commander", replied the one named Fulsa'.

"And you as well Demon?" inquired the commander in a tone that Kim had to admit demanded some respect.

"Sure, but don't expect me to give you the sir yes sir treatment", retorted Kim as the commander chuckled.

"Fine, then my name is Isin, here take the detonator.", He tossed here a small orb as they approached a hallway with a strange circular symbol burned into it.

"Divided Path" said Isin, "Very clever Fulsa', which direction do we take?".

"You and Rano' will take the left and drop down the plug, while the Demon and I will break right and loop up around replied the one named Fulsa'.

"Very good, happy hunting, and use these to get its attention" shouted the commander as he tossed his grenades to the other pair.

Skidding to a stop at the intersection of the halls Fulsa' and Kim primed the grenades and sent them flying into the stalks of the

Juggernaut, breaking into a run down the Hall as they heard an explosion followed by a screech. Hearing the parasite begin to charge them, Kim saw that they were headed into a dead end. "I thought you know where you were going, the hallway ends just up the way", shouted the spartan. "Your ineptitude is stunning demon, surely you would recognize your own device" chuckled Fulsa'. Sure enough, Kim could see a small cable appear as they drew closer, rising up through a shaft in the ceiling.

"From what I can remember", retorted Kim, "You don't like using our 'primitive' technology".

"Be that as it may demon, I will not leave a potential tool unused". Hearing the Juggernaut closing in, they both dived for the cable, giving it a swift tug in unison. A click could be heard as the cable shot upward, taunting the Juggernaut as its prey flew away from it.

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Flying up the shaft a thought occurred to Kim, "Don't these things end at a plug?".

"Indeed it does, but I moved the burnt husk of an Enforcer to jam it".

"That means there's still a low ceiling, and were moving pretty fast".

Looking up the only words they could think of were "Uh-oh".

Fulsa' hit the plug first, only to be sandwiched by Kim as she let go of the cable. Gravity being the cruel mistress she is, it began to pull them back down the shaft. Kim grabbed the edge with one hand and grabbed the disoriented elite by his harness and threw him up and over. Pulling herself over the edge Kim heard the noise of crunching metal reverberate up the shaft, peaking over the edge she saw the silhouette of the Juggernaut as it pulled itself up towards them. Turning back to the elite she saw him concentrating on a glyph on the corner. "Don't tell me you can't read your own writing, or worse yet you've taken one to many blows to the head".

"Are all of your kinds females as witty as you? It's partially worn, the maintenance drones must be trying to scrub it away... We need to go this way", pointing to the right.

"What makes you think I'm female?"

"Careful observation Demon... Wait here", he said, "when it comes out of the plug we'll shoot it to draw it's attention." Drawing his carbine as they crouched behind the corner.

"You may have been too busy admiring your doodle to notice, but I don't have a gun." replied Kim as she took position behind him.

"Take this gun here" Fulsa' replied, attempting to hand her an M7 he found on the ground.

"I know you hate me but I'd rather use a rock and a stick."

"What's the matter with this weapon?"

"It's useless that's what."

"All weapons have there faults demon, it is up to a true warrior to compensate for those faults. In practiced hands no weapon is... 'useless'".

"Fine, I'll take your carbine and you can have the M7, if your a real warrior that is".

"Of course Demon, just try to remember how to aim."

Kim wanted to beat him senseless with his own gun, but the sound of the Juggernaut emerging from the plug returned her to the situation. It pulled itself out from under the plug, its stalks twitching, trying to sniff out there position. Fulsa' stomped his hoof against the metallic floor. The clanging noise caught the monsters attention and it began its charge. " I thought you were going to shoot it" yelled Kim as they ran.

"I had an idea on how to save ammunition, and it worked didn't it?, besides were going to need it". Looking ahead Kim could see infected humans and elites amble towards them.

"Let's see how you'd use that pee-shooter then."

"Of course Demon". Seeing the lead combat form jump into the air, Fulsa' kicked off the ground and met it mid-air. Having the greater mass and velocity he knocked it backwards firing into its chest. Using it's body to cushion the fall, he landed in front of the parasite. Keeping his momentum going he rolled with the infected corpse, kicking it into the flood. The corpse hit a carrier form, exploding with the grenade Fulsa' stuck into it's cavity. "Hurry demon, we must punch through while they're weak".

Sprinting through the mob of disorientated infected, Kim noticed a plug at the far end of the corridor with a symbol etched into it. "Do we head down?"

"No, we stay here and die, do you see anywhere else to go primate?".

Yep, I'm gonna kill him, thought Kim, raising her carbine she emptied her clip. With a his the plug retracted. "Just in time, the Juggernaut is right behind us". Leaping down the shaft, a sound of grinding metal came from above. "The Juggernaut is holding the plug open for the others, quite clever" he said.

"This isn't normal behavior?"

"No, I've fought them before, in the gas mines they were disorganized, feral even. Now they operate machinery, have bodies that don't require hosts, and worst of all co-ordinate attacks, I would say that these flood are fundamentally different, but by what means I'm not sure."

Thinking back on when she was attacked Kim made another realization. "They also show restraint... when they almost killed me they all

raised there arms in unison, in order to do that some have to wait for others to finish. It's not a lot but it's something, and it shows they can think of a bigger strategic picture".

"Hmmm, I'm surprised Demon" said Fulsa' as they landed on the level below.

"That they would show restraint?"

"No, that you'd be perceptive enough to notice."

"_What is with this guy? I may be his enemy but this is a whole other level"._

"Okay smart guy whats the plan now?" shouted Kim as the flood began to drop down behind them.

"That, over there!". Sure enough, tucked away in the shadows was a small ATV. "Why do you have a mongoose? Do you even know how to drive it?".

"Of course I do, but I would venture a guess that you, incredibly enough, may drive better than I would". Hoping on the goose's back he pointed forward. "Down the hall is the last plug, I'll shoot it open, your going to have to turn to the right though, that's the direction the shaft curls, once we've hit ground level just keep going straight". Hearing his M7 go off Kim hit the gas and accelerated down the hall. Sensing the prey was getting away the infected elites and humans moved out of the way of the Juggernaut as it picked up speed. "It's gaining on us!" exclaimed Fulsa' as he fired his gun. "Then stop aiming at it and shoot the plug!". Surprised to see they were there so soon Fulsa' balanced his arm on Kim's shoulder and emptied the clip. The plug retracted and Kim slid in sideways, dropping down the shaft. Hitting the wall as it curled upwards the tires gained traction and pulled them along faster.

"Commander, were heading down the shaft, are the charges ready?", inquired Fulsa'. "_He didn't check before he headed down?" _

"Yes, the charges are set at the exit". Kim readied her detonator, looking behind she could see the Juggernaut was closing in.

"This is gonna be close", She could see the light from the exit and pulled out the detonator.

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Rano' and Isin' had just set the charges when a thought occurred to Rano'. "How much do you want to wager the one of them is dead?"

"What would make you assume that Rano'?" entertaining the veterans thought experiment might prove a valued distraction while they waited for the pair.

"Do you think the Demon finally became fed up with Fulsa's arrogance or that Fulsa's past would catch up to him?"

Isin' pondered the question. "Fulsa's arrogance mostly stems from youth Rano', but some of it from his own promising talent, if I gave

him an order he will follow it to the letter". Isin' paused "Were he to disobey the order he would bring dishonor to the clan he fights so much to make up for, as for the Demon I suspect it respects him more than it is willing to admit. Considering that while he did try and kill it, he did save the Demon from being assimilated by the parasite. Much to Fulsa's dismay the Demons do have honor, and this Demon in particular has a debt to him that demands payment, one way or another."

Rano' nodded his head. "I still think one of them killed other, but suppose they both come through, what do we do with the Demon?"

Isin had considered this, as they trotted away from the entrance he mulled over his options and came to a conclusion. "I've have thought about killing the Demon, but we are not in the clear yet, we still have to fight our way through to the camp and since we haven't gotten any com responses it's best to assume there is no camp. Without any knowledge of what we face I believe extending out... truce, would be most advantageous."

"And when we do get to safety?"

"We'll see, but I will say that killing the Demon outright when it helped us escape would leave a bad taste in my mouth."

"Fulsa' won't like that". At that the both heard a whine emanating from the entrance, followed by what sounded like a stampede. "Speak of the devil, or should I say devils?" chuckled Rano'.

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The first thing Fulsa' realized after the blinding flash was that he was cold, the second thing he noticed was that something heavy and green was on top of him.

His eyes fluttered open and his mandibles quivered with annoyance as the Demon began to stir.

"Get off me before I cut you down the middle, in hopes that at least half of you will roll aside".

Kim lifted herself from the elite and looked behind them. The way they came out was pure molten metal, with no sign of the flood except for burnt in silhouettes from the flash of the covenant anti-matter charges. She turned to find the other two elites as they approached, what really got here attention though was the Elite she had used to cushion her impact. His face was one of pure elation and hunger. "Now Demon, that we have escaped the parasite we have a score to settle."

"Really?" Kim activated the sword she took off of him when they landed and brought it to bare, "Well don't keep me waiting."

"Not only do you disrespect my clan, but you brandish a weapon you have no right to use? I will take great pleasure in killing you with your own!" Brandishing a large combat knife, her combat knife, the elite began to charge.

"Enough!" yelled the commander as he stepped between them, blocking Kim with his own sword he kicked Fulsa's sword out of her hand.

Turning to face Fulsa' he dared him to take a step closer towards the Demon.

"It's one thing to have to lead you out of this mess, but it's another thing entirely to have your own sub-ordinates try and kill each other! Fulsa' if you had half the brains you think you do you'd realize we're still under threat from the parasite. Demon you would realize that killing us brings you no closer to getting towards your kind. If either of us are going to survive we need to work together."

"But..."

"Say that again and I will gladly hold you down and let the Demon kill you for disobeying my orders".

Stunned by his Commanders anger he lowered his head, "Yes, sir..."

"Demon, I don't think I need to tell you twice."

Kim looked around the barren wasteland before her, he was right after all, there was no telling when the flood would attack next. "Fine, I'll uphold our agreement so long as you do".

"Good then we are agreed, if we move across this plain and over the hill there should be an encampment, if it's overwhelmed we may be able to salvage some vehicles."

"And what becomes of me?"

"If we find safety we will part ways, I am honor bound by our agreement, and I am of higher rank than any warrior that would be there."

"If you are done talking I'd like to get out of here with my hide intact." cried out Rano', "I've found a Spectre in a snow bank". Hoping into the drivers seat Rano' pulled along side, "Demon, I'd prefer you on the gun, you seem to not have been hit on the head as much". Fulsa' bristled at the veterans comment, after being thoroughly reprimanded by the Commander he was in no mood. Noticing this Rano' laughed, "Calm down Fulsa', and hop in, I don't have time for your bruised ego". Isin' jumped on the other passenger side as Rano' boosted the Spectre across the plain.

Cresting the hill a Banshee looped above, the radio crackled with the voice of the Jiralhanae pilot. "It seems more stragglers are emerging from the Wall, I will alert the camp to your approach. Slow down once your in range of the perimeter and don't stop until you've reached the center of the camp.", the transmission cut out as the Banshee sped away.

"That was strange", muttered Fulsa'.

"What?" inquired Rano'.

"The pilot... he didn't waggle his wings as he left."

"So?"

"Banshee's always waggle there wings when they pass by friendly ground forces, somethings not right here."

"Your being paranoid" replied the commander.

Fulsa' slumped his shoulders as both his compatriots disregarded his unease. "_He's on to something though_", thought Kim, "_He may be arrogant but he knows what he's doing." , _more on edge than before Kim got the elites attention.

Looking up Fulsa' could see the Demon signal him, not only had he been again deprived his vengeance, he was humiliated in front of it and regarded as paranoid by his comrades, now it wanted his attention?

He was surprised to see it handing him the hilt of his sword, looking down at it his mandibles slackened in confusion. Looking at his own side he reached for the knife he found and gave it back to the Demon.

"Thank you, Demon"

"Your good with a sword, I'd be dead if you weren't, lets just hope you don't have to use it soon"

Pondering her statement a thought occurred. "_Did she mean on her or against the Jiralhanae at the camp?_" For the life of him he couldn't tell.

3. Et tu, Brute?

Disclaimer: I don't own the Halo books or the game

****So That's how it is?****

****Chapter 3**
>

****Et Tu, Brute?****

Halo Installation-05

Quarantine Zone

The Ninth Age of Reclamation

As the Spectre cleared the hill Kim could see the covenant camp. The perimeter had three floating platforms with plasma turrets at the top and Jackel sharpshooters, behind which stood a wall ringing two prefabricated buildings. There was one opening in the wall flanked by two turrets, the grunt manning it was waving them in. When the drove past the grunt squeaked in surprise when it saw Kim, see simply waived back at is as the Spectre drove towards the center of the camp.

Rano' hit the dampeners, slowing the assault vehicle until it stopped by the main building, out of the command post a Brute captain and his sub-ordinates emerged. The Brute captain walked towards Isin' with

his hands linked behind his back. Kim couldn't tell if it was smiling or snarling.

Fulsa' caught sickly sweet aroma the air, "_Somethings not right, I smell Sangheili blood"._

Isin' got out of the vehicle and approached the Jiralhanae, "Where is the head of this camp? We are to report to the Special Operations Commander at once."

"I, Tiberius, am now leading this camp and it's warriors".

"What happened to the Sangheili that manned this station?"

"We were attacked by the parasite, and they were infected." Looking over Isin's shoulder Tiberius spotted Kim. "It seems you caught yourself a Demon, we will be rewarded greatly for such a trophy."

Tiberius' Brutes began to move around the Spectre, circling it. Fulsa' got out of the Spectre and stood behind Isin' warily eying the Brutes. Kim kept the turret trained on the ones in the rear.

"Tell your men to stand down, the Demon is not to be harmed. In my authority as a Special Operations Officer I made a truce with it for our mutual benefit against the parasite. Radio the nearest Phantom so that we may acquire transport."

"In your authority as a Special Operations Officer? Well in that case I guess my hands are tied aren't they men?", he paused as the rest of the Brutes chuckled. "I think the Prophets will turn a blind eye to such... truces". The Brutes were starting to get closer.

"What makes you think I would allow you to bring dishonor to us?"

"You really don't see whats happening before you do you? No wonder the High Prophet of Regret is dead, yours is an incompetent and slothful race. For to long the Prophets have relied on you. Now that the Sacred Icon has been retrieve, we the Jiralhanae, shall become the dominant race."

"To break the covenant just to capture a Demon? This is heresy, when the Prophets find out..."

"Breaking the covenant? Fool! The Prophets ordered us, and we are only to happy to oblige. Brothers, the first one to kill the Demon with his bare hands will be able to present it to the Chieftain!"

With that Tiberius stuck the barrel of his captured human shotgun into the mandibles of the Elite and pulled the trigger.

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Kim didn't know what to be more surprised about, that the Brute shot the Elite in the face, or that it's skull was still intact. Isin' had just managed to move his head, keeping his brain out of the way of the pellets, letting them shred the side of his face. As he dropped to the ground Fulsa' charged the lead Brute in a blind rage. Before

she could bring the turret to bare on Tiberius Rano' spoke. "I think you have bigger problems Demon." Sure enough all of the other Brutes had ignored Fulsa', intent on making Kim their trophy kill. Rano' threw the Spectre in reverse to gain distance smashing the rear most Brute.

He was still holding on the rear.

Being dragged under the Spectre the Brute grabbed Kim's leg and started trying to pull her off as she clung to the turret. Rano' slightly turned the Spectre before it could go out of the gate and plowed it into the wall, pinning the Brute with the bumper. Kim unsheathed her knife and drove it into the beasts head. "Gun it Rano' he's dead!".

"Now that's teamwork Demon, these Brutes will pay for what they've done to my brothers!" he yelled as he hit the accelerator.

"I just wish Fulsa' had had more than suspicions" she shouted as they circled the inside of the wall, dodging plasma fired from the Grunts and Jackals;

"You mean like something that resembled a usable plan?", responded Rano' as he fired his rifle at the Brutes that were charging them. "At least the idiotic Captain gave them an incentive to drop there guns... not that I would be worried."

"Something like that yeah. Screw it, I've got one, you keep trying to run these bastards over and I'll take out the turrets along the wall." Lifting herself onto the Spectre's turret, Kim jump on top of the barrier. The Spectre accelerated forward after being freed from the excess weight. Sprinting along the purple barrier Kim found her first target, a Jackal trying to focus it's sniper on Fulsa' as he duelled the Brute Captain. "_Oh no you don't", _before the Jackal could shot Kim was on it, she yanked the rifle out of it's hands, knocked it's head off in one swing and kept running. "_I still have Brutes on me, gotta run it and gun it", keeping her speed she ran across the section of the wall that went behind the main building. Coming around the other side she could see two Brutes that decided to charge Fulsa' splattered by the Spectre.

Looking down the wall Kim spotted three Brutes running her way, behind her another four. "_ They charge on all fours like animals... Lets try this out"._

Kim screeched to a stop and simply fell back into the camp, while the Brutes collided with each other on the wall.

Rolling onto her feet Kim came up to Fulsa' as he swung his sword, finally decapitating the Captain, shoving a grenade into it's mouth he hurled the head at the Brutes that made it down from the wall.

He turned towards her. Pure hatred in his eyes. It was unnerving to say the least.

"Fulsa' calm down, we need to get out of here, keep your focus". Kim walked towards him slowly her weapon pointing down.

Fulsa' roared a challenge. Brandishing his sword Fulsa' charged towards Kim.

In the blink of an eye he closed the distance. Before Kim could raise her rifle he drew back his sword, bringing the two plasma points eye level, and stabbed.

Clean past her head.

Behind her the body of a Brute fell, the blood erupting from it's heart vaporizing as it spilled over Fulsa's sword. He started to laugh.

"Did you actually think I was attacking you Demon?" the arrogance creeping back into his voice.

"Yes I did" She replied as she took aim towards him and fired, the particle beam exploding the head of his would be attacker. "And now were even, we need to get out of here, wheres Rano'?"

"Having the time of his life it appears."

Rano' pulled up along side of them hitting another Brute, "Grab the commander and meet me at the gate, we need to go." There was blood and dents all over the front of the Spectre. What appeared to be several tufts of skin and hair caught the sharp metal edges that had formed. Kim and Fulsa' ran towards Isin', the rise and fall of his back told them he was still breathing. Turning him over they saw why he was still out. He was missing two mandibles and the close proximity of the blast scorched the side of his face. His shoulder was shredded, exposed to the bone, blood seeping out of it. "He must have blacked out due to the pain" Kim said as she threw one arm over her shoulder, "He's lucky he still has his head".

"We'll see if infection doesn't set in"

Kim wondered what that meant, "_Didn't they have medicine?"_, pushing the questions aside she and Fulsa' moved as quickly as they could with the commanders dead weight, the remaining Brutes grabbed their weapons, desperate not to let them escape. Plasma pinged their shields as Rano' braked in between them and the Brutes. Loading the commander into the passenger side Kim jumped onto the turret, covering Fulsa' as he rolled over the Spectre into the other side car.

Rano' hit the accelerator, getting one last quip in.

"You know if you had been quicker killing that Captain Fulsa', I wouldn't have had to dent this fine vehicle so much".

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The Brutes had boarded their Ghosts, off in the distance a Banshee could be spotted. The Demon opened fire on them while Rano' took them around a cliff edge.

"Just don't fall off" croaked Isin'.

"Commander, your conscious!" exclaimed Fulsa'.

Isin' looked at his reflection in the Spectre's polished chase, he knew he was working off of borrowed time.

That was no death for a warrior.

"Fulsa' I don't have much time."

"It'll be okay sir, we'll make it out of here."

"Only for me to die of infection and blood loss? No, I won't weigh you down so I can die a little bit latter. I will go out with honor."

The Ghosts were gaining on them, the Banshee gaining speed and altitude.

"Yes sir, it was an honor to serve under you." A sullen tone in his voice.

"And you Fulsa' are a fine warrior", raising his voice, "All of you are." He grabbed the side of the Spectre. "Rano' try and keep them alive and remember Fulsa', keep my promise to the Demon". With that he jumped, flying away from the Spectre towards the pursuing Brutes. Landing on the first ghosts hood he skewered the driver with his Energy sword, as the Brute gurgled it's last breath Isin' grabbed the controls and smashed the craft into the other ghost. The other Ghost clipped the side of the canyon wall, bouncing back towards Isin'. As they collided again the force was to much, the two ghosts exploded in a ball of Plasma, the tumbling mass of super heated metal decelerated into the other Ghosts, sending them off the edge.

Isin' had his warriors death.

The cliff expanded into a valley as the Banshee dropped into a dive firing its plasma cannons. The Demon opened up on it with the turret, as it maneuvered out of the way and climbed up again.

"Demon, would you try to aim at the Banshee, that might keep it from getting such close shots." yelled Rano'.

"I'm sorry, I don't know why I didn't think of that!".

The Banshee dove again, a small green light pulsing beneath it.

"Oh shi..."

The Fuel Rod hit the back of the Spectre and everything went black.

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Agrippa pulled out of his dive, he was missing his left pod, but still combat worthy.

Looping his Banshee around he surveyed the damage.

The Spectre was destroyed, it's occupants strewn about the ground. How Tiberius managed to let them slip from his grasp Agrippa couldn't guess, he knew that his pack was less than capable, but such foolishness!

"_No matter, I will not be so unlucky. Time to pick off the

Sangheili, with them dead the Demon will have no one to protect it."_

He noticed something stirring in the snow, he's lips drew back in a savage grin._
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"_Him... it seems one of them wants to play."_

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Fulsa' lifted his head out of the snow bank, he was pissed. Coming to his feet he walked towards the Spectre's wreckage, eying the Banshee as it swung around for another strafing run.

"You vile creatures, you murder my brothers, trick my commander, and you don't even have the honor to kill us face to face but in the safety of your Banshee?".

He grabbed the turret from the Spectre, it's energy source still stable."_Forerunners be praised"._

The Banshee's dive shallowed out, coming at Fulsa' head on. He primed his grenade and threw it as it he brought the turret to bare dodging bolts of plasma.

"You..."

He thumbed the trigger as the grenade exploded in front of the Banshee, blinding the pilot as it was enveloped in the blast.

"Will..."

The Banshee began to spark as plasma melted the hull, it's pilot accelerating into a suicide crash.

"Die!".

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The Banshee exploded as Fulsa' fell backwards away from the blast.

Kim was sure he was dead.

"_That arrogant bastard finally did himself in, it was pretty cool to watch though_". She got out from the piece of metal she was under and inspected him. Much to her surprise it seemed that his shields took the majority of the pain, dispersing the shock wave enough so that it only knocked him out, not turn him into something with the consistency of jelly. He had some cuts on him to, some of them deep that would need to be protected from infection.

Kim swore to herself as she brought out her Biofoam injector, "_I wouldn't mind patching you up if you weren't such a prick you know that_?". The green foam expanded into his cuts, sealing off the blood flow and delivering antibiotics to ward off infection. Cinching him up with some gauze for when the foam would break down Kim stood up to survey the surroundings.

It was a mess.

The Spectre was gone, the back-end blown off and the front end wrapped around a rock with Rano' on the other side. "_We'll I'm not carrying them, that's for sure."_ With that she put away her medical supplies and grabbed the large flat piece of metal that had come off of the Spectre's side. Grabbing two metal beams she bent them into hooks and snagged the edges of the flat piece. Taking a plasma pistol off of what was left of the dead Brute she over charge it and used the heat to weld the metal together, making a crude sleigh.

Turning back to Fulsa' she lifted the unconscious Elite onto the sledge when she heard footsteps.

It was Rano'.

"Fulsa' won't be to happy to have the Demon carting him around."

"Well your welcome to carry him if you want to." as she took one of the beams and lifted it over her shoulder Rano' took the other.

"Ha, a bit of an ego bruiser will do him some good, especially after this."

"Why do you say that?"

"Did you destroy this Banshee?"

"No."

"I sure didn't, and unless the Commander faked his own death I don't think he did either, which just leaves Fulsa'."

"Your right, he did destroy it, he grabbed the turret from the busted Spectre and just opened up on it."

"So, what we have here is a Sangheili who just predicted our betrayal by the Jiralhanae, and then took down a Banshee with wreckage from a Spectre."

Kim didn't need to think it over twice. "He's never going to shut up about it is he?"

Rano' turned his head and gave Fulsa' a once over. "No he's not, but I think it'll be over something else, at least it will be directed towards you."

"What do you mean? I just bandaged his carcass up and am dragging him on a sleigh to who knows where, why would he be mad at me?"

"Because you bandaged him up, for us Sangheili to rely on another is a sign of weakness."

"..."

"Don't worry I think it will be humorous."

"Your... your a strange one you know that split lip?"

"Said the Demon carrying a passed out warrior."

"One that seems to want nothing more than to kill me, why is that again?"

"That is an interesting story..."

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"Push forward!" Screamed the Zealot Xavi' Zaranomee, "May the shed blood of these Demons be forever remembered in our clan's epics!"

The Sangheili strike team had found the humans Orbital Defense Generators, the main source of power for there planetary defenses. With them gone this mud ball of a planet... Reach, as they called it, would be cleansed of their filth. Zaranomee had used his pull to ensure that the team comprised mostly of his clan, such honor they would have for exterminating the Demons inside. They were fighting back, hard, but they would fall all the same and the more they fought the grander the tale it would make!

They had landed after the original team was bombed by human air forces, in the process though the fools had annihilated there own forces, didn't they see the were outnumbered and couldn't waste so many combatants? To try and make up they sent in there Demons.

"Sir, the 6th generator has been destroyed." reported a minor.

"Good, that leaves the last complex, bring up the Lekgolo, once they've broken down the doors well storm the generator, all will have a chance to kill the Demons!".

With a clank of armor two large beasts approached. They were both larger than the average colony size, by a quarter at least, the orange worms beneath there armor function as one massive creature.

The Lekgolo pair charged the closed doors, as they're combined mass ripped the doors apart the Sangheili warriors flooded through and were meet by heavy gunfire. The Demons increased resistance drove them forward. Egged on by the Demons a third of the covenant warriors had entered the complex when the explosive charges near the entrance detonated collapsing the front section of the building. The charge stopped as the Sangheili inspected the damage. Then came a sound.

Looking towards the sound, all beheld a pile of derby as a fist punched through it and a gold clad Zealot pulled himself up, cutting the concrete with his sword. He emerged and straightened to his full height, "Do not hesitate brothers, we must avenge our fallen clan mates!". Courage building up in him Ful'sa' and his clan followed the Zealot into the building. The hallway was circular, slowly bending inwards, there were no windows as the facility was a closely guarded secret. If it wasn't it would have been targeted by "insurrectionists", as Ful'sa's study's told him.

The Hallway ended in a large sealed door. "You two" ordered the

Zealot, "Set the charges!".

Two red clad veterans approached the door and set the anti-matter charges, encasing them in shields that would focus the blast into the door away from those that had placed them.

The charges went off, blasting the door inward. Xavi' raised his sword and charged past the smoke, leading the rest of the warriors as grenades dropped from above, a lone Demon had an entire box of them as it ran across the railings. Before they could shoot him the explosives rocked the entering Sangheili. Xavi's powerful shields failed, he couldn't hear the warning though as two machine guns on each edge of the reactor opened up on him. Fulsa' watched the Zealot tear into pieces, wasting no time he moved through the door and rolled behind a control console.

This reminded him of his first deployment against the humans, he wasn't truly ready then.

He was ready for this.

Suddenly the lights went out.

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Kim heard a growl from behind.

"Oh good, someones done napping."

Fulsa' lifted himself up and took note of his surroundings, they were marching out of a canyon, snow covering the peaks as the wind blew harder. He looked down at himself and saw wrappings around his wounds.

"Which one of you did this?"

"I did" retorted Kim as they began to reach the top, "And before you go on about your honor I didn't know you didn't take kindly to medical treatment."

Fulsa' simply let out a low growl, remembering Isin's last orders. "Where are we Rano'?"

"I don't know, but I thought if we found some high ground we could get a better idea of what were up against, I've received no communication Covenant nor Human."

"What of the parasite?" A long scream echo'd out of the canyon, giving him his answer.

"There coming out of the canyon!" Rano' yelled as he fired down the way they came.

"There's no time for that, Kim eyed a long stretch of slope down the other side of the ridge that spread out into an alluvial fan. Grabbing the smooth bottomed sleigh she dragged Fulsa' with she set it on the edge. "Let's go split-lips!". Fulsa' cut the two bars with your sword. Getting out of the large sleigh he sliced the handles off.

"What is this?"

"Our way out, and turn that sword off before one of us gets impaled", with that she threw both of them belly down onto the metal sheet and jumped on top, the force of her landing pushing them down the hill. They picked up speed as the disc skidded down the side, the uneven terrain buffeting them. "How are we sup..", as they hit a bump Fulsa bit his mandibles, "Arrgh, how do we control this thing?".

"We can't, not at this speed." Kim replied, careful to keep her tongue away from her chattering teeth, "But I'm not about to slow down." Pointing at the horde of Flood chasing after them as they began to come over the ridge. "We need to hit the ground running, if we can put some distance between us we may be able to make it out of there canyons." The disc was slowing down and the slope tapered off.

"And then what? We have no way out of here."

"If you two would stop bickering I suggest we decide what to do before we hit those tanks." piped up Rano'.

"What?"

The sled caught a rock, sending it flying over the Scorpion. Landing in a heap Kim heard the roar of the main gun. Shells were hitting the canyon wall tearing the flood apart and kicking up dust. They crouched behind the treads as the gun fell silent. They took aim at the receding dust cloud.

"Why do you still have that M7?", Kim said as she took note of Fulsa's weapon, "How do you plan on hitting anything at this distance with that?"

"It's gotten me this far hasn't it? And last time I checked that's my carbine your using, so unless you want to trade I'd suggest you close you filthy human speech-hole."

The dust cleared, the Flood dead, a clanging could be heard as both the drivers hatch, and what appeared to be a makeshift metal cover for the machine gunners position flew open.

"Well what have we her? Two monsters and a metal man? Now this is what I call re-enforcements!"

"Brothers! it was quite a sight to see you coming down the hill!"

"I am sergeant Alfonso Castro", introduced the ODST.

"And I am Jora' Thulamee, quickly brothers, hop onboard so that we may depart this infernal ring".

Rano' took an aggressive posture, "How dare you insult the sacred rings! Not only do you do so, but you drive a Human vehicle... with a Human!", aware of his own hypocrisy Rano' waited for their explanation before recounting their own adventure, surely the parasite necessitated a temporary truce, and after the death of Isin', honor dictated that they uphold it as long as required.

"We are working together because the Arbiter has revealed the truth

and is uniting us in resistance to the Brutes! Why are you jumping down hillsides like children with the Demon?"

"Survival necessitated our co-operation" retorted Fulsa', wishing Rano' had kept his usual calm demeanor.

"Right..., how it came to be matters not, for now the die is cast. The Prophets lies have been revealed by non-other than the Oracle itself, the treachery of Brutes was ordered by the very Prophets we forged the Covenant with, our path to redemption clear. To regain our honor we must undue the damage we have caused and stop them once and for all."

"You heard the monster, if you don't hop on board we are leaving you faster that I can hop off a Pelican for shore leave." With that the three took position on the tank as it roared to life. "I love this thing." Exclaimed Jora' as he put it into gear. "Just watch your ammo amigo, if we run out, I will be forced to crush them with my fists!"

Speeding down the canyon the two explained what had happened.

"So I was being held prisoner by the Brutes when the big white one...", "Tartarus" said Jaro', "That Tartarus ordered our execution, before the filthy apes could kill us, the entry to the ledge opened and half a dozen elites lead by, by this Arbiter guy just come in swinging. Johnson used the distraction to get us into the Scarab. We were gonna slag the whole lot of them, but the funny thing was that the Arbiter wanted to stop Tartarus, making our plights one in the same! So we make our way to the activation building and blast the doors open with the Sacrab. Johnson left, telling us to stay and guard the Scarab encase we just needed to waste the entire building. After he went in Phantom after Phantom comes in dropping Elites and Brutes! We didn't know who to shoot down until they were already deployed."

"Well they must have stopped the Brutes, because the Arbiter comes aboard and uses the Sacrab's Com system to contact a cruiser that they had just captured, ordering that we needed to rally and head for Earth the stop Truth.

Fulsa' spoke up, "Jora' how did the Arbiter survive? what is the truth of these rings and the Great Journey?"

"It was revealed to him by an Oracle of the true nature of the rings, and sent by the parasite through the rings transportation network to stop the consecration of the Icon. The true nature of the sacred rings was not one of salvation, but one of destruction. They were built to eradicate all life in the galaxy, so as to starve the flood." the weight of this new found truth heavy evident in his voice. "All that we have fought for was lies, billions dead because of our belief in the Prophets."

"I can't believe that all we have fought for is a lie..." Rano' sighed, "Yet the Jiralhanae's betrayal is something I can see with my eyes, I will wait until I see the Arbiter for myself to judge the rest of your tale."

"A fair response brother, what say you young one?" aiming the conversation at Fulsa'. Kim focused her attention oh him, careful not

to show it.

"In the last cycle I have been sent to aid in the search of the icon only to have our lords machinery attack us on our holy mission, have fought against an abomination that I cannot explain, fought alongside a Demon until we could find safety only to have said "safety" betray us. My commander is dead and our only way out seems to be with a pair as unlikely as us on top of this smelly farting machine."

"Watch your mouth puta, you can insult me all you like, but leave this beautiful vehicle out of it."

"Its... a lot to take in." Turning towards Kim, "It occurs to me Demon that I don't even know your proper name."

"Kim-183.", Fulsa' looked down turning the name over his head, "Demon sounds better."

Kim glared at him, yet he seemed not to notice. They crested another hill and the Kim could see a large encampment on top of a long plateau.

Jaro' worked the Scorpion's radio, "This is armored lance 20 returning from patrol, we have two Special Operations warriors and one Spartan, I repeat two Spec Ops and a Spartan, over."

A human voice came over the radio, "Rodger that Lance 20, routing a Phantom for confirmation and retrieval, over."

"What is that?" asked Kim as she surveyed the plateau.

"Our salvation my metal friend, All of the surviving UNSC and Elite forces on the ground were ordered to rally here, to be processed and checked for infection, once we are cleared the captured cruiser will pick us up."

"And then what?", the anticipation in Kim's voice noticeable, she didn't want to spend much more time with here present company.

"Ha, look at her, asking me like I'm anything but a lowly sergeant! I do not know Spartan, though I do suppose they would benefit from my knowledge, as it is though I am stuck trying to pull people like you out of the fire."

Fulsa' observed the Phantom make its approach, its turrets inspecting them as they got closer making sure none were infected. "A thought occurs to me, wouldn't the parasite notice such a large concentration of... food?"

"Indeed they would donkey if we we're the largest concentration of food, but it seems they enjoy your space city."

"They have taken High Charity!"

"Indeed they have brother, they crashed the Humans craft into it while the Brutes committed their genocide, with the city divided there was no hope."

Different emotions filled Fulsa's psych, he had only visited High Charity a few times, but it was always the jewel of the Covenant

empire, a reminder of the power of their holy writ. To think of it in the clutches of the parasite was almost too much to bare. "At least I didn't have any clan members on High Charity...", he was brought out of his pensive state as the Scorpion was lifted into the air by the Phantom, working in a spiral it brought them up to the edge of the large plateau. The encampment was a hub of activity, everyone moving away from the center. The thick cloud cover parted as a large cruiser descended above them initiating its gravity lift at the center.

"It is about time we got off this rock and did some real fighting!" shouted Castro as the tank hit the ground with a thud. "Watch how you drop us next time! I might have to blast you out of the sky as a warning to others!"

A human approached the tank as it rolled towards the motor pool, "Spartan, I am Lieutenant Powers, Captain Keyes has requested you and your... team to follow me to the briefing room."

"Yes, sir", slightly amused by the idea of the two elites being her team. They disembarked from the Scorpion as Castro and Jaro' speculated about what would come next, their chatter becoming dim as the four walked towards a large building to the right of the Cruisers intense levitation beam. All around Human and Elites, mostly Elites now that Kim thought about it as she became conscious of the stares they were giving her, were moving about. Organizing supplies, cleaning and repairing vehicles, some even conversing among each other as if the war never existed. It was surreal to Kim to say the least.

Purple security doors opened after blood samples were taken and analyzed, ensuring they weren't infected. Fulsa' watched Kim putting her gauntlet back on curious as to why her skin was so white. Filing that knowledge away for later he began to wonder why he and Rano' were included with the Demon. The last set of doors opened and Fulsa's mandibles slacked in surprise, before him stood a diminutive human female, but next to her... "The Arbiter!" Rano' exclaimed.

"Capetian Keyes." Kim saluted. "At ease Spartan, as you may well know the Elites have come to an... understanding with us, Arbiter."

"For too long the Prophets lies have blinded our race. We must regain our lost honor and stop the prophet Truth from activating the halo arrays. Part of that means working past old issues..." The Arbiter looked towards Keyes.

"That means you Spartan"

"What about me?" Kim didn't like where this was going.

"Don't be obtuse D.. Spartan, your kind are special amongst the humans for your abilities in combat, and because of that you've gained a level of respect amongst the Sangheili, but when one considers how that respect was gained and its impression on our psych it it cause for some concern. There are many Sangheili who do not see the importance of forging an alliance, many who cannot accept what they've done as genocide. I fear that some of my warriors reaction to seeing you aboard our vessel will either end in their or your deaths, which is unacceptable."

Before Kim could respond Keyes spoke, "So the Arbiter and I thought it would be best if, considering your unique status and what has transpired in the last 24 hours, you were escorted by at least one Elite until we're back on Earth."

Kim defiantly didn't think it could have gotten this bad, "And who would be... escorting me?", the words tasted like ashes in her mouth.

"That depends, Keyes and myself have yet to hear how you actually survived the Quarantine zone, do regale us."

Kim recounted her mission into the Quarantine zone, how she made a truce with the late commander Isin', his death as a bid to save them from the Brutes, Fulsa's single handed destruction of a Banshee, and coming across sergeant Castro and Jora'. After hearing this the Arbiter tapped at the screen in front of him, whispering something to Keyes. She stood up and faced the Spartan. "That's quite a story soldier, and in light of this information our choice is clear. In order to assure the stability of our alliance, you are to be escorted by Special Operations warrior Fulsa' Zaranomee.

Fulsa' stepped forward and the Arbiter held up his hand to silence him. "Do you deny Fulsa' that you, out of any other Sangheili, have worked the most with this Spartan?"

"No, sir."

"Do you deny that your late Commander gave you explicit orders to uphold his truce with the Demon?"

"No, sir."

"Then I, as the leader of our separatist movement, am reminding you of your duty to your late commander and am clarifying of what responsibility it entails."

Fulsa' averted the Arbiters gaze. "Now that that's settle, the three of you are to go aboard the Cruiser Persistent Elation, for decontamination and to be assigned to your quarters. We are departing this ring and rallying with our brothers holding High Charity in Quarantine, the Jiralhanae fleet is becoming weaker but they are persistent none the less. We cannot afford to let them nor the parasite win. You are dismissed".

Walking out of the command building, the three approached the gravity lift.

"Fulsa' "

He turned towards her, "Yes Demon?"

They walked into the center, standing still as the beam triangulated on them and focused.

"I want to make one thing clear." She began to feel light weight, soon the three were being lifted into the sky.

"Yes Demon?"

"I don't like you, but if you don't want me to beat you to within an inch of your life, you'll knock the Demon crap right now."

Fulsa' chuckled, he supposed it would be best if he didn't antagonize the Demon intentionally.

"Of course D... Kim.", she turned to him.

"Thank you." The doors to the cruiser opened and they were whisked inside.

4. The New Kid on the Block

Disclaimer: I don't own Halo.

****So That's how it is?****

****Chapter 4**
>

****The new kid on the block._**
>

Halo Installation-05

_CSS-class Battle Cruiser Persistent Elation
>

The Ninth Age of Reclamation

Pugyap was tired, tired of working for over half a cycle, tired of wearing his heavy methane pack, and tired of having the Shipmaster watching his every move. Stifling a yawn he raised the containment field around the loading bay, checking his console he saw the next group of personal were prepped at the base of the ships gravity lift. As the lift began to hum the Shipmaster shifted his weight, Rtas' Vadum was always tense before ground forces were loaded up, even though if any of the soldiers on the plateau below had been infected they would have show signs long before they were lifted into the ship, that's why they took so long to get here in the first place.

Thinking of how joyous he would be when he finally got to his food nipple he spoke up. "Shipmaster sir, the next group is ready, two Sangheili and a human."

"Very good, bring them in."

The metal doors to the hanger parted, Pugyap squealed, "Demon in the Hanger!"

"Silence Unggoy, and begin the decontamination!". Forcing himself not to initiate the fail safe that would eliminate any trace of biological matter within the field, Pugyap regained his composure and thumbed the intercom. "Warriors, before you may move about the ship you must be checked for infection, your armor is to be removed along with any bodysuits so that they may be cleansed of any flood biomass, you will be evaluated for any signs of infection, if you show them you will be euthanized, after your evaluation you will be given

clothing appropriate for your species and you will have your armor returned to you in a cycle. If you show any resistance to the medical drones you will be euthanized, if you do anything that appears to be an act of hiding infection you will be euthanized, if you refuse to provide your armor for decontamination you will be euthanized, if anything I have said is unclear now is the time to speak up." The three were silent.

"Very good, commencing air sample check. A large cylinder began cycling, testing the air that had been taken in for flood spores, that was another reason for using the plateau as the loading base, the high elevation and cold temperatures would act as a natural barrier to the spores. The air tested negative, "Okay remove your armor", the two Sangheili removed their armor and set it down in a pile in front of them, but the Demon didn't and raised it's hand." the Shipmaster didn't look happy. Pugyap thumbed the intercom, "What is it?"

"My armor isn't designed for just me to take off, I need at least another to help me, and I thought I should tell you before you 'euthanize' us." Pugyap looked at the Shipmaster, he tilted his head to the side in thought, stroking his broken mandibles. After a few seconds he nodded to the Unggoy, "Yes, you may have one person help you, the other is to stand at the far side of the containment area." At that one of the Sangheili, the older one Pugyap could see, moved to the far side. To Pugyap the younger seemed annoyed at that, but it wasn't his concern.

The Demon was right it did need help, its helmet and gauntlets were easy enough but the main chases had several mechanisms layered underneath it. The top layer of plating were all seperate pieces, following that was several layer of things Pugyap wouldn't even begin to guess on, then the body suit until finally the Demon had nothing. Pugyap was surprised, in his mind he imagined a devil with horns or something but it was just a human, it was bigger yes, and covered in numerous scars but still diminutive compared to the Sangheili, the same overgrown primate he had seen time and time again. He checked his console, it seemed that the Spartans armor was to be handled special, due to its more... human nature. Pugyap directed the drones to collect the armor and inputted the codes for human, MJOLNIR they called it, armor. Satisfied with the drones he move them to the next step.

"They next drones will take samples to be analyzed and tested. You are to first take a deep breath and exhale into the drone to see if your longs contain any spores that would have evaded the air processor, your blood will be drawn and images taken of your insides, if you have a question raise your hand." None raised there hands, "_Good, this was going smoothly_" Pugyap thought. The samples were taken and sent to the labs. "While your tests are being run you will be decontaminated, prepare for chemical shower, keep your eyes shut and your mouths closed as some report a stinging sensation, that's how you know it works." The jets that had been installed before they came to pick up the soldiers turned on, spraying specially prepared chemicals created by Huragok to cleanse flood biomass from non-flood mass. The chemical shower stopped and the next batch was delivered to react to the first and a lather developed, lastly the hydro jets initiated washing away the chemicals. Sonic scrubbers powered up to hit anything left at its resonant frequency, after that the drones went in to scan them.

The drones certified them as un-contaminated externally, "Your test results are back, you are clean". The shields descended, "Please pick up your clothing on the pedestal to your left, if you don't like what you receive submit a grievance to your immediate superior." The three got dressed, "An Unggoy stationed past those doors will escort you to your levels, remember that your armor will be delivered to you in one cycle, Shipmaster is there anything you'd like to add?". Pugyap really couldn't care, but he didn't want to get on the wrong side of an Sangheili, especially the Shipmaster.

Waiting for them to get dried and dressed he replied. "We have much work ahead of us, rest, train and nourish yourselves, for you will not have long to enjoy this time. You are dismissed."

"Yes Shipmaster." The two Sangheili replied, followed not quite in unison by the Demon, "_No matter_." Rtas' thought, "_It will get used to our customs_". They walked away with the younger Sangheili leading the Demon, "_So that must be who the Arbiter assigned to watch the Demon", _Rtas' checked his manifest. Recognizing the name he chuckled, always one to appreciate irony.

The Unggoy piped up, "If I may your excellency can I inquire as to what is humorous?".

"It is nothing Pugyap," Pugyap was surprised the Shipmaster remembered his name let alone use it, "Reset the field and prepare our next batch, we have many warriors to process and little time."

"Yes sir, loading next batch for de-contamination!".

-0-0-0-

Only one word could describe Kim's situation.

"_Alien", _she thought. They were being led by another Grunt through the bowels of the ship, towards their quarters.

She didn't like having her armor taken away, though she found the prospect of euthanasia even less palpable. The clothing they gave her fit well enough, it even had the same cut and color as UNSC wear, but the fabric was definitely alien. "_Beggars can't be choosers..."_

She also didn't like having Fulsa' eying her during the de-contamination process with her armor off. He was studying her, no doubt about that, like she was a specimen, a slide underneath a microscope. She wasn't self conscious, she just didn't want to be treated like a scientific curiosity. She hoped it was kind of curiosity, the alternative was even less appealing.

They continued to follow the grunt down the purple corridors in silence. The relationship between the Grunts and Elites seemed to be one of "you don't speak unless spoken to", winding down the halls the Grunt stopped and pointed down the left turn of a four-way intersection. "Veteran Rano', your assigned to barrack 34, 7 doors down to your right". Rano' nodded to the two of them, proceeding down the hall as Grunt began walking again.

A few more twists through identical corridors, "_Why is everything purple?" she thought, the grunt stopped. "Considering the nature of your racial status human, you will be given the privilege of having officers quarters for your security." The Grunt hopped up and hit the switch to unlock the doors. They swooshed open revealing a small room with a cot, a computer terminal and a washroom. "Thank you." She said surprising the Grunt. She stepped in the room and without so much as a word hit the close button on the other side, sliding the door shut from the Elite and the Grunt.

"Alright and if you will follow me..." she could hear them slowly walk away. "_ Finally some privacy and rest" _She fell down on the bed and closed her eyes._

-0-0-0-

Pugyap finally was able to get to his food nipple. He walked down to the Unggoy barracks. The air lock sealed, replacing the toxic oxygen with fresh methane gas. An all clear chime sounded and he removed his harness, placing it onto the receiving rack. Stretching out his back he felt it give a few dull pops, "_I'm getting to old for this._" he thought. The doors opened to the Unggoy barracks, he scanned the room watching his fellow pack mates playing and gambling, mostly gambling. Walking over to the food nipple, Daptap came up to him, "How was the cleansing process?" he snickered.

Pugyap sighed, "Boring, but what else could it have been, they finally let me go after a Human and Sangheili pair was processed, a chatty lot they were, make my head throb.". Pugyap took a nip from the food dispenser. "Hey, who knows any secondary human languages?", a few of the communications Unggoy raised there hands, "What does puta mean?". Two of them chuckled, telling Pugyap all he needed to know, it was bad enough he had to talk them through the process but they had to insult him to? A thought occurred to Pugyap though.

"Me see Demon!" Pugyap squeaked! That would get there attention.

Jall came up, "No you didn't, you see Demon, same being dead".

"No, it was in between two Sangheili, for the de-contamination process. It took it's armor off to!"

"Allright" said Daptap, "Suppose you not addled, what did the Demon look like?"

"Yeah how big were its fangs?"

"Or it's tail?"

All of the Unggoy had gathered around Pugyap by now, he did enjoy the attention of his pack. "Well that's the thing, it just looked like a human, it was bigger and had more muscle than the rest, but it wasn't any fiercer looking."

"Pugyap you liar! How are you stand there and say you see Demon, then just say it's like an ordinary human... but bigger?". Pugyap had to admit it did sound suspect, but it was the truth!

The doors shuttered open and Thull walked in, "Whats with the commotion? Did the nipple break again?".

"No, Pugyap said he saw a demon!" This peaked Thull's attention. "But he liar, said it was just a big human, no horns or anything!"

"It's true, it was big, and there were two elites, and it was the kind with the bigger chest!"

"Wait a second" said Thull, I think I know whats up, someone get me color powder, all of the colors to! Here's how we solve this, you will write down a physical description of the demon on one side of the room, and I'll draw what I thought I saw. Then we compare, that will tell me if your lying. I've been escorting groups all day, if it went through chances are I'm the one who escorted it.

Someone brought the powder and they split off into groups. Thull was good at this Unggoy art form, he mixed the pinks with a bit of white and a little brown to even out the skin tone into a pale color, forming the face he used a bit of green and brown for the eyes. Grabbing brown and yellow he made the hair. "I only have enough for the face!" he yelled, someone better stop stealing the powder or they wouldn't be able to do any more art. He was finished. "Okay everyone but Pugyap look at my drawing, Pugyap give me a description".

"Okay, the Demon has yellowish hair, is pale, much whiter than any human I've ever seen. And they have greenish eyes, and the two holes mid face were medium!"

"More."

"Okay, huh... it's ears had those lob things other humans have, but not to big... oh and it had a scar above it's eye!"

Sure enough that matched the drawing. "Then it's settled, we do indeed have a demon aboard", a timer went off on a another, Yupup's, armor.

"I'm going to be late, I've gotta get down to reactors." Hurrying out the door he left the other Unggoy to their own devices and he suited up and emerged from the airlock to the main corridors.

He reached the reactor room, almost running into the head engineer, Yarno' Kundamee, he simply replied with a "Your late, get to your station.", as he minded his data streams. Yupyup began giving the reactors readings a once over, making sure the computers kept everything at proper levels, "_That Sangheili is a strange one". _Yarno' was indeed different than most Sangheili. His clan was one of the few that focused on becoming scholars even though it gave them a very low status in the their culture. The benefit was that they were still very much needed by their kind as a sort of... leverage against the monopoly the San' Shyuum held on science and technology. While the San' Shyuum claimed to know the inner workings of the Forerunners devices, Yupyup had a suspicion that they just had Huragok do the work for them, if anything he was certain Yarno' new more than they did.

"What is the radiation absorption levels Yupyup?"

"Within parameters sir." Yarno' was also more talkative and easy-going than most, and he liked to keep a conversation going even if Yupyup found it boring. One time he tried to explain how the

reactors work, how the hydrogen was heated and contained by a magnetic field, and how when it fused the new helium molecule was lighter than the previous hydrogen and that that change in mass was the energy they used to power the ship. It was all very confusing to say the least.

"So why were you late." Despite his easy-going demeanor he still was Yuppyup's superior, his demeanor only meant that he would hear Yuppyup out instead of immediately punishing him.

"Sorry your excellency, but the one of the other grunts working de-contamination said that he saw a Demon, in the discussion I just lost time you see I..."

"A Demon?" That got his attention.

"So he claims, another verified his description." Yuppyup smiled that his bosses curiosity was getting the better of him.

"Do you remember it?"

"Yes sir" Yuppyup gave his description of the Demon to the best of his recollection.

"Very interesting..." He was back to focusing on his reactor, though Yuppyup caught him working on diagrams for things every now and again. Satisfied that he pacified his commander he went back to checking the gauges. "Oh and Yuppyup?"

"Yes sir"

"If you ever show up late I'll throw you into the reactor myself."

He always made that threat, but Yuppyup wasn't fool enough to challenge it.

-0-0-0-

Fulsa' woke up, looking at his clock he could see he'd been out for almost half a cycle. He looked around, expecting to see his personal effects when realization hit him. Scolding himself for his ineptitude he donned his bodysuit and walked out of his room, he'd have to find a way to correct his... problem. Perhaps Rano' would assist him...

Pondering the matter further he walked down the corridors nodding to a group of Sangheili as they passed, he kept walking then stopped when he heard the word "Demon". Spinning on his hooves he ran back up the corridor. Surprised to have him run at them the other Sangheili turned in wonder. "Did I hear you say Demon?"

"Yes brother, word has it that there is a Demon on board, two of the Unggoy said they saw it flanked by two of our brothers."

"And what do you make of this news?"

Looking at the other two, the main Sangheili replied, "For it's sake, it would be wise if it kept with it's... retainers." With that they nodded and headed up the corridor.

"_This isn't good." _

Picking up his pace he moved down towards her quarters he chastised himself for oversleeping. He didn't like having to watch her, but he wasn't about to be neglectful of his duties. He found the door and knocked, holding back the urge to wail on it.

"_No response, not good". _He knocked a second time, still not response. "_If I'm to watch her maybe I have access..." _He put his hand on the pad, it gave a chime as the door swung open.

The room was empty, Fulsa' closed the door and brought up his map of the cruiser, there was no telling where the Demon could have wandered off to._ "What is there to do on the ship he thought", _It was a war vessel, simple, there were wash stations, gymnasiums, mess halls... how would she even find any of them to begin with? "_Her console!"._

"_Every officers quarters had a simple layout of the ships floors, if she was going anywhere she'd have to have brought it up, maybe she left the map in place for quick reference"_

He entered her quarters again and brought the terminal online, the first image to pop up was a map, highlighting a path to one of the gymnasiums_. _

"_Shit"_

The gymnasiums were always packed, Sangheili used them for working out and sparring with each other, with that many warriors looking to make a name for themselves... _Fulsa' didn't like the possible number of outcomes.

He reached the door of the gymnasium and rushed through.

-0-0-0-

Kim opened her eyes, "_How long have I been asleep?"._

She got up and proceeded to the washroom, there was a drain and a nozzle next to a holo display, randomly pressing buttons she found out how to turn the water on, make it hot and cold, and apparently auto dispense what she hopped was soap. It had the same consistency at least, a third button turned off the shower and hot warm air blew to dry her.

"_Alien..."_

She got out proceeded to her terminal_, _someone had left a drawing of what buttons did what, but she seemed to understand some of the glyphs. "_Strange" _she thought, typing away at the display she brought up a map of the cruiser, giving it the once over she rotated the image and began zooming in. The command center seemed to be in the very center of the ship where the shielding was the heaviest, unlike human ship that kept the command center in the front of the ship. Engine rooms, hanger, mess halls... all pretty standard. Then she saw it, "_A work out room, good_". Kim always worked out during her down time, all the Spartans did, it kept them focused in between

combat. Even more so though, she was in an alien environment and sticking to a routine helped dealing with it. Putting her pants, boots, and tank top on she checked herself in the mirror. Her hair wasn't very long so she didn't need to put it up.

Taking another quick scan of the map she closed her door and moved out into the hall.

"Down the hall, make a left, up the lift, keep going and stop".

"Easy enough" She worked the display to open up the doors.

"This is big."
>

They're were weight benches, a track around the entire complex, swimming pools, obstacle courses three stories high, meditation alcoves, sparring rings...

"And lots of Elites. I'm a big girl, I can handle myself."

She walked down towards the more secluded weights sections. As she headed past she could feel them starring at her, her sensitive ears picking up angry growls.

Ignoring them she found a machine that, judging from the others being used looked like a bench press. It was strange, there was a bar with two orbs, but no were to actually put weights on. Fiddling around with it she found a gauge. As she turned it the bars orbs gave off a slight glow, she picked it up.

"Its got some weight to it, lets see what messing with this display does" She worked the displays glyphs and tried again, it was lighter. Trying again she found she made it heavy, giving a little extra push she brought it to the weight she wanted.

"I would be nice to have a spotter, but I don't really want to ask anyone" She hopped onto the bench and began to lift.

She finished her reps and placed the weight on the holder, resetting the display when three Elites approached her.

"Quite impressive, I'm surprised that a human could lift as much as an Sangheili, and your not even short of breath."

"Thank you..."

"In fact, would it be in error to say that you a bit... larger than the other humans?"

"I guess it's just a luck of the genetic draw, now if you'll excuse me", She was confident but not stupid. She whipped her brow and made to walk past when the third Elite grabbed her shoulder, a crowd was starting to form.

"Let go of my shoulder... please". He was squeezing, his grip like iron. He let go.

"Of course... Demon". Her eyes went wide and she turned to face him,

he was standing at his full height, putting her a good foot and a half shorter. He had a long scar across his neck and snarl on his mandibles.

"What did you call me?"

"Demon!" he stepped forward, Kim held her ground. "Don't try and pretend your not, we've word from our brothers that a human matching your description is the Demon, comparing your larger size and muscle capacity on par with ours, there can be no doubt."

"What do you wanna do about it." She could take him, maybe not the small group around her, but she'd take out as many as she could, they wanna go to war, she'd take'em to war.

He clicked his mandibles.

"What am I going to do Demon?" He raised his voice for the group to hear, "I'm going to..."

"DEMON!" everyone turned towards the entrance. Someone was making their way through the crowd, rather aggressively so. The last two Elites were pulled back and Fulsa' popped his head forward.

"If you have any honor Demon you will face me! Or did you leave it all in your husk of an armor?"

"Oh Fuc..." The Elite that originally accosted Kim pushed her aside and got into Fulsa's face. "I will be the first to face the Demon, what gives you the privilege to usurp me?"

"Usurp?" Fulsa' flexed his bicep, showing off his special operations glyph, trying to use his rank for added affect. "Does anyone in this room doubt that a member of the Zaranomee clan, more than anyone else has first claim on the Demon for revenge?" Surveying the crowd he could see none, grabbing Kim by the arm he dragged her along with him to the sparring rings. He looked down at her, meeting her eyes he saw pure hatred gazing back at him. He bent his head to whisper in her ear, "It's part of my plan, just play along."

She scowl softened to understanding as she pulled her arm away from his grip.

Moving into the ring Fulsa' began to work the crowd that had followed them. "I Fulsa' Zaranomee, Special Operations Warrior of the Fleet of Particular Justice here by challenge you Demon! Before the time winds down I will have my revenge for my fallen clan mates!" He turned towards her, taking a fighting stance.

"Bring it." She brought her fists up.

Fulsa' roared his challenge and charged, he was like a freight train, throwing a right hook. Kim caught it and used his momentum to flip him over her. He landed on the mat hard.

"_Good, lets see how you like this..." _She had let go of his arm when he launched himself at her, catching her midsection when she sprawled onto him. Raising her elbow she drove it into his spine. She rose it again as he twisted and blocked the blow. Shooting his arm up he palmed her in her chin.

Getting on their feet they gave each other some space. Fulsa's back hurt, and though he was glad she was holding her own he didn't want to be upstaged either. She threw a kick high, aiming for his head. "_Here's my chance". _He blocked her kick and pulled her foot to his side, striding forward he placed his foot behind her support leg and pushed her back down to the mat. A cheer rang out amongst the Sangheili, he raised his arm back to strike her when she planted her other foot into his low hanging head. Stunned by the kick he loosened his grip on her leg. She rolled back to her feet.

"Whats the matter split-lip, didn't think I'd put up a fight?". There was a grin on her face, she was enjoying herself.

"_Good"_ Fulsa thought_. "_On the contrary Demon, I was hoping you would."

She shuffled forward and they continued to spar. Fulsa' was physically stronger than her, but she had a tenacity about her, she wasn't going to lose. Their hands and feet became blurs as they attacked and countered. Kim worked her way behind Fulsa' and leapt onto his back getting him in a choke hold, aiming high up the neck. "That may work on a human, but not me!". He grabbed the arm against this throat with both hands, jumped into the air and flipped them. As they hit the mat Kim was squished by his greater mass. Loosening her grip he got up and grabbed her by the throat with one hand so he could throw her across the mat. She grabbed his hand in turn and pulled up, kicking him with both feet in the face.

His head whipped back and he dropped her. As she got up a buzzing sound was heard.

"Time!"

They were covered in bruises, Fulsa' was sure he'd broken a mandible while Kim had a bite mark on her calf. He dropped his guard and offered his hand for a shake. She looked up at him, half surprised that he knew what a hand-shake was and half suspicious, but took it none the less.

"This Demon has proved itself in combat against me!" Raising her arm up in the air. " My clans mates truly died an honorable death fighting her, and I would gladly fight alongside her against the Jiralhanae that have killed so many of our brothers. Does anyone here doubt that I fought a fair match against the Demon?" This was the test, if someone came up Fulsa' would make quick work of them, cementing that the Demon did fight with sufficient prowess. If no one came up however, that meant that they were convinced... or maybe find it all suspect and would not sully themselves by taking part of it, to challenge Fulsa' meant that they accepted the fight but suspected his prowess. It was a subtle but important difference.

Fulsa' surveyed the crowd, "_Someone, anyone, challenge me"_. He had a backup plan, an 'Ace in the hole', as the humans called it.

He'd rather not do it however, and he was certain the Demon would have none of it if she knew the full meaning of it.

Someone moved through the crowd. "I challenge you!"

It was Jora'. "_He must know what I'm doing, thank the forerunner_".

"I Jora' Thulamee, challenge you Fulsa' Zaranomee, on the basis that your combat prowess wasn't enough to truly test the Demon!"

"I accept your challenge brother."

They both went into the ring. Jora' fought well, but Fulsa' was the better, he pinned him to the mat and wrapped his head into a lock.

"Sorry brother, but you know you have to black out" Fulsa' whispered.

"Do you think I wasn't prepared for that? Just keep that Demon out of trouble." he croaked.

Jora' went slack and Fulsa' let go, checking his pulse he made sure Jora' was okay then stood up.

"Well, what say you?"

A warble emanated from the gathered Sangheili, signaling there acceptance. Word would travel fast across the ship, earning Kim a more honorable distinction, more importantly if anyone were to challenge her, since she had proven herself on par with Fulsa' it would also mean a challenge against him, something that didn't happen often.

Kim watched the Sangheili disperse, two of them carrying Jaro' off, "_Poor guy_". Fulsa' walked past her rubbing his broken mandible, heading for the exit. "Hey, thanks for... whatever you did back there" she said as she trotted along side him. Taking note of her limp he slowed his pace, "Someone has to keep you safe from your own stupidity, and the person they ordered to do that is me." He grabbed a gel pack from a wall and gave it a quick smack, feeling it become cold he tossed it to Kim, she put it on her side as he grabbed on for his mandible.

"So if you sparring me in a 'revenge match' didn't get the job done, what was your back up plan?"

"You don't want to know..."

"Seriously..."

"It's not something I want to discuss." his tone becoming short.

"All right keep your secrets split lip, but tell me one thing."

"What?"

"Where can I get something to eat?"

"That I can answer."

5. Ghosts in the Machine

Disclaimer: I don't own Halo.

****So That's how it is?****

****Chapter 5**

>

****Ghosts in the Machine_**

>**

Halo Installation-05

_CSS-class Battle Cruiser Persistent Elation

>

The Ninth Age of Reclamation

Kim woke up, it had been about a week after her first match with Fulsa', the Elites were still processing troops off of the plateau and while Kim liked the R&R she was eager to get back to Earth. She had begun to settle into a routine, waking up, getting breakfast, working out, lunch, training with Fulsa', dinner then bed, not to exciting but that's the point of a routine isn't it? Getting up out of bed she looked herself over in the mirror by the washroom.

"_Not to bad, though I did beat him yesterday"._

There were bruises covering her form, and a few extra bite marks, but they were becoming fewer and far between compared to their first match. To be fair he was toning it down a bit as well, these last matches were more for exercise and fun than to prove anything.

"_Fun? Now I know that I've spent to much time here". _Getting dressed she put her hair back up and headed out the door towards the galley, all the exercise made her hungry.

Walking down the halls towards the galley Kim took in the activity around her, groups of Grunts moving up and down the hallways, Elites conversing with each other in pairs standing outside of doors, she bobbed her head up and down to them the way Fulsa' showed her and they returned the salute in kind. It was an interesting dynamic, watching how the different species interacted, she'd seen them interact before of course, but this was without the pressure of trying to shoot them.

The biggest thing she noticed was how the Grunts acted around her, they treated her like they would an Elite, it was actually kind of cute how they scrambled out of her way when they pieced things together, like ugly little animated stuffed animals.

Laughing at her analogy, she walked up to the Elite galley and moved past the sliding doors, it was busy to say the least.

The galley set up buffet style along the walls, each side with it's own kitchen, Kim headed to the far wall where the line was the shortest and grabbed a tin. Surveying the galley she studied the Elites and Humans eating. There was a self imposed segregation to say

the least, the Humans tended to eat in groups of only Humans, the exception being Castro and Jano' who tended to eat by themselves. The split wasn't just the Humans though, the Elites seemed to separate by rank, and within ranks there seemed to be cliques based on clan ties. It wasn't rigorous, and there were plenty exceptions to the rule, but it was noticeable. Fulsa' explained that clans were like families, it was a matter of comfort and blood, would you rather sit and eat with a fellow spartan you'd never met or would you rather sit with another human?

Moving down the line she began grabbing food. Elites were omnivores, like humans, but ate much more meat. The menu wasn't too bad but the lack of variety in grains, veggies, and fruits was noticeable. Taking into account the food that wasn't as... agreeable for human digestion, and you were left with only a few choices. They weren't too bad though, grabbing a slab of razorback meat, some blue bread, a green paste that reminded Kim of sweet potatoes, and three apple sized purple fruits she set to find a seat.

If this was a UNSC set up she would have tried to sit next to her fellow Spartans, the simple luxury of knowing immediately where to sit and eat had been deprived from her.

At least for a second or so, she felt a hand come pat her shoulder and she looked up to see Fulsa'.

"It looks like your having the razor back, good choice", Kim observed his own tray had several slices of the meat.

"Come let us eat." Following Fulsa' they wound past several tables until they found one with a familiar pair.

"... And that was the last time I visited Habana! I still never found out what happened to the other half of the car! "

"And lookie here who graces our table hermano, if it isn't the only couple odder than ourselves!"

"Fulsa', Kim" Jano' bobbed his head.

"Look at this guy, so formal, it should be enough that they get to bask in the glow of our greatness!"

"A wonder I get to meet the only person cockier than Fulsa'" Kim chuckled as she began to eat her food. "How's your neck Jano'?"

"Good enough." He began to talk to Castro again with Fulsa' joining in, Kim sat quietly and ate her food, she was free to join the conversation and that knowledge alone kept her content while she simply watched people around her, her eyes swept towards the door as it opened, a lone Grunt in black armor came in and surveyed the room. A minor approached him, taking an aggressive posture when an Elite in black armor pulled him back and pushed him away.

"_Interesting..."_

The black clad elite began talking with the Grunt, nodding its head it pointed towards the table Kim sat at, saluting the Elite the Grunt made its way down towards them.

"Special operations warrior Fulsa' Zaranomee you are to report to the Fleet masters quarters"

Fulsa' stopped mid-chew, he knew what this would be about, it was only a matter of time, swallowing his food he stood up. "Lead the way Zlim", with that he left the table giving a quick bob of his head.

"I will be escorting Spartan-183 to her commanders quarters, the Fleet master has informed me that you know your way back to his quarters", nodding his head Fulsa' left the table and exited the galley, waving goodbye.

"_How does he know what that wave means?"_

"Please, follow me", with that the Grunt began to leave, not waiting for Kim to finish.

Saying goodbye to Castro and Jano', she caught up with the Grunt and headed out.

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"Here you go" Zlim, showed Kim the door to Captain Keye's quarters and gave a quick salute as he continued down the door.

Kim knocked on the door and the entrance opened.

"Good to see you Spartan come in, have a seat."

"Thank you ma'am", Kim walked in and took the chair directly in front of Keyes desk.

"I'll cut the small talk Spartan, were leaving this back water bullshit and heading straight to Earth"

"_Finally_", "When do we leave Captain?"

"Right now actually, the last of the ground forces have been processed, and the Arbiter is eager to get to Earth, we are board another cruiser and make a slipspace jump as soon as possible."

Kim sat there mulling things over, she could leave but she'd need help into her armor.

"Yes ma'am"

"Very good, I've called for a Marine to go to your quarters, she'll help you with your MJOLNIR armor, when your suited up report back here and we'll head to the hangar with the Arbiter and his Elites, any questions?"

"No ma'am"

"Then you are dismissed" Saluting the Captain, Kim headed down the corridors towards her room.

"_Guess my shore leaves over_"_

-0-0-0-

The last of the ground forces had been processed, a few newcomers had shown signs of infection and had to be... purged, unfortunate but there was no saving them. Rtas' Vadum had ordered the Cruiser to prepare of liftoff. The Persistent Elation was to join the rest of the Sangheili forces above the ring to continue the Quarantine efforts of High Charity and fleet action against the Jiralhanae. Rtas' checked the console in his quarters, reviewing images of the Jiralhanae line. They were at a stalemate, preoccupied by the parasite neither side wanted to fight too hard, lest they become vulnerable to the a surprise attack from High Charity, more to the point the Jiralhanae outnumbered them and had control of the carrier Shadow of Intent.

Thel' Vadum had promoted Rtas' to commander of the Fleet of Retribution as he prepared for his departure with the humans to Earth. Before the Arbiter left, Rtas' wanted to leave no doubt in his mind that the Jiralhanae would be dealt with.

To ensure that Rtas' needed that carrier.

The Jiralhanae were smart enough to realize the importance of their flagship and had it sequestered behind their main line. To attach it head on was suicide, and more importantly would risk tipping the balance in the favor of the parasite. He thought about sending in a strike team, but how could they take over such a large carrier? Even if they could take it they wouldn't be able to stop the Jiralhanae from alerting the surrounding ships.

The door chimed distracting him from his machinations.

"_About time Fulsa' gave me his report". _The fleet master had heard about what had happened in the gymnasium, and wanted to give Fulsa' a proper dressing down for almost single handedly destroying their alliance with the humans.

Rtas' thumbed the door control, bidding Fulsa' to enter. Fulsa' stood rigidly in attention. "You wanted to see me Fleetmaster?", his body language showed there was no question in his mind as to why he was there.

"Fulsa' would you care to explain to me why you thought it was a good idea to let the Demon almost get killed? More to the point how do you expect to regain your honor after such foolishness?".

"My humblest apologies sir, I immediately checked on her when I awoke but Kim had already reached the gymnasium, by the time I got there things were already escalating."

Rtas' flexed his lower mandibles. "_Kim?_,_ So there on a first name basis are they?"_

"You were instructed to keep the Demon out of trouble, how do you expect us to trust your abilities after day one?"

"By challenging the Demon I..." Rtas' cut him off.

"You got lucky! what if Jora wasn't there to accept your challenge? Then what would your foolish challenge have meant?" Rtas' anger was

welling up, he had alot on his mind, and this fool had almost made the top of his shit list.

"I had a backup plan".

"_Oh this I have to hear", _Rtas' stood up, "And what pray tell was that?"

"I..." The Sangheili before Rtas' seemed to shrink as he looked his superior in the eye, then regained his composure.

"I would have initiated Claim."

Rtas' almost choked out his retort. This was certainly a surprise. "Claim? Perhaps your becoming to close to the Demon"

"I do not harbor... an attraction to her!"

"Then why use Claim? Assuming the Demon didn't kill you after you told it what your actions meant, how would that have helped you at all?"

"If any Sangheili wished to harm her they would be honor bound to respect Claim and attack me first, even if I wasn't able to defeat them I would at least be able to keep my orders. To have them respect Kim was the best outcome, but ensuring I was the primary target for assassination was also acceptable."

Rtas' tilted his head to the side in thought. His actions were still foolish, "To claim the Demon as your mate you would risk assassination, most likely from your own clan, for the slim chance that it would keep it alive?"

"My orders were clear, keep Kim alive at all costs, as far as I'm concerned my clan lost it's honor along time ago. To uphold my orders and my late commanders agreement to a truce is one of but many things I must do to cleanse myself."

"_Interesting", _"And what makes you think the Zaranomee clan has no honor?"

"Our clan more than any other has advocated for the genocide against the Humans, by falling prey to the San 'Shyuum's lies we have tarnished our own names."

He averted his gaze from Rtas' Vadum, the weight of his clans actions becoming fully realized, when an image on Rtas' console drew his attention. "_Maybe I can atone for another action..."_

"Before you came here I was going to demote you, but I can see that you are truly dedicated to your task if a bit... foolish, but who among us aren't foolish in our youth?"

Rtas' walked back behind his console, "If memory serves you were stationed for quite some time on the Shadow of Intent, weren't you?"

"Yes sir" Fulsa' was glad to have the conversation shift.

"Do you know of any... weaknesses it possesses, sometimes firsthand

life aboard a ship can tell one more than a data read out."

Fulsa' looked like he was in turmoil. "There is... one thing."

"Yes?"

"I don't know if it would be able to gain us control but, it's our best shot..."

"Well then explain yourself!"

Fulsa' told him his plan, it was quite simple really, and if handled correctly would only endanger the life of one warrior.

"Fulsa' I don't know if I should have you gutted and dragged by your entrails or to promote you to the rank of an officer.

"I volunteer myself for this mission sir, if I am not successful I'm confident the Jiralhanae will give me a tortuous enough death.

"Indeed, ready yourself, I'll have a captured Seraph fighter prepped for your departure, the Arbiter and the Humans are leaving as well, your Seraph will join their escort to the Cruiser _Joyous Light_ and break off, you will loop around _High Charity_. Your Seraph will have the needed security codes to get on board, it will also be packed with explosives. Once your on board you will sneak out to the maintenance shafts, your Seraph will detonate, giving you the distraction you need. After that you'll only have you own intuition to help you, is that clear?"

"Yes sir"

"Good, head to the Hanger."

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Kim marched down the corridor behind Keyes and Johnson with the Arbiter behind her in tow. She saw herself in the reflective metal of the corridor, her armor repaired and polished.

"_It's good to be home._"

Captain Keyes had told her half an hour ago that they were departing to a Cruiser _Joyous Light_, that would then head back to earth to stop Truth's fleet. Kim was eager to take the fight back to Earth, if there was still an Earth when they got back.

The doors opened revealing the large hanger that had processed them for decontamination, "_Fun memories_" Kim thought. She looked around the hanger, hoping that maybe Fulsa' had wandered in. She still thought he was an arrogant prick, but he'd grown on her, and she had at least hoped to say goodbye before she departed to Earth. "_Oh well, maybe I'll run into_ _him again, maybe even repay him for his unique brand of 'help'._" _

She saw the flight of Seraph Fighters that would escort the Phantom, "_They aren't messing around_", _Then she saw the fighter at the very end of the line, its hull had slightly different markings on it,

and...

"_Why did Fulsa' just board that Seraph?" _

_ "If he could fly a fighter he would have bragged about it at some point... somethings not right here."_ She radioed Keyes on the private chat.

"Commander?"

"Yes Spartan?"

"I wish to remain on board one of the Seraphs, I have reason to believe that something... suspicious is going on."

"Anything malicious?"

"No ma'am... just a feeling, may I head to the cruiser separately?"

"And how am I going to explain to these Elites what your actions mean?"

"Tell them that you want to split your forces encase of a surprise attack, and tell them that you are confident of the Arbiters abilities to keep you safe, stroke their ego a bit."

"And if we have to depart without you?"

"They may be planning actions against the Flood. If something happens and the flood get loose, it doesn't matter if I make it to Earth will it?"

"You have a point, Spartan I give you permission to board the Seraph of your choosing."

"Yes ma'am, thank you ma'am."

With that Kim broke from the entourage, as Captain Keyes explained to the surprised Elites why the Demon was roaming the hangar. Sure enough, upon hearing the praise of the Arbiter and Keyes logical explanation they were inclined to look the other way. Kim headed to the far side of the hangar, bowing her head to the pilots in the traditional Sangheili salute. It had a certain... subtlety that she admired, and it was something Fulsa' had hardwired her to do as a way of greeting fellow warriors.

"_Warriors? Now I know I've spent to much time around him_."

Now that she thought about it she spent more time with him and the Sangheili than she did with the other Humans, "_Well, more like in the presence of the Sangheili, I only really talked to Fulsa' and sometimes Rano'." _She had seen Jaro' and Alfonso around the mess hall and they were friendly, but they had to many inside jokes for her liking, she had seen Jaro' among the few Sangheili that would accompany the Arbiter. "_I wonder what that says about the Elites that want to come to earth_." Chuckling inwardly she tapped the console to open the Seraph and snuck aboard.

The airlock sealed and Kim waited for her to feel the craft power up,

no sense in surprising him until it was too late for him to do anything about it.

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The Hangar emptied of warriors, with the last door sealed and the atmosphere pumped out the shields dropped. The first lance of Fighters exited the bay with the Phantom and its decoy in the center, Fulsa' powered up his craft and proceeded with the rear guard, flying in formation he accessed his nav and had it calculate a trajectory towards _the Shadow of Intent. _He had to be careful, if he got too close to High Charity he would be shot down by the Flood or the automated point defense systems, if he stayed too close to the center of the Jiralhanae too soon he would be shot down. His best bet was to cut the engines and allow the gravitational pull of High Charity to take him in an arc through the Jiralhanae lines. This way they wouldn't detect him, once he got close enough he'd blend into a formation that was heading in to dock with the carrier.

Slowly he broke off from the escort, letting the computer take control. Sitting back he took in the view of Halo. Such beauty, such engineering prowess, yet it was all for a doomsday device. "_Reminds me of the Demon", _he chortled, he regretted that he wasn't able to bid her farewell, and a part of him wanted to go to Earth. "_However, I have my own important matters to attend to". _He looked back at the explosives that were hooked up towards the power cells, "_Hopefully they won't be the last matters I attend to." _

Then he heard it, a tapping, coming from the airlock.

There wasn't any air in there, it couldn't be a parasite, this was a captured Jiralhanae fighter, even they wouldn't be foolish enough to fly with contaminated vehicles.

The banging was more systematic now, almost like a code, Fulsa' cycled the airlock, as the air filled the chamber he could hear someones voice.

A voice he knew.

"Open up split lip, I don't want to sit on the porch all day long!"

"_Infernal Demon!" _A small part of him was elated, but he quickly killed it as he opened the door.

"Bout time you opened up, thought I was gonna have to kick down the door" She took her helmet off and shook her head, her hair was getting longer, how humans dealt with it Fulsa' could only imagine.

Ignoring the familiarity of the scent as it hit his nostrils Fulsa' grimaced. "What are you doing here, your supposed to go with the rest of the humans!". Now he was getting angry, he was too far in now to turn back.

"I saw you get into a strangely marked fighter when you have never once gloated about your piloting abilities, so I took it upon myself to see if anything suspect was happening." She noticed the brief twitch in his mandibles before they clicked in anger. "I'm not saying

you were going to betray us, but I figured something big was happening and you'd need my help, I do owe you for saving my life, probably a couple times at this point." She scanned her surroundings and noticed the explosives, "Shit, don't tell me I signed up for a suicide run, I knew you guys were crazy but this is taking it up a notch".

Fulsa' sat back down in his chair and pointed to the large display of the Carrier. "We are going to be taking back the Carrier _Shadow of Intent,_ once we control the ship we will send a coded message to the Sangheili line, they will move their ships from the center and we'll make a slipspace jump to fill the void, making this the Flagship of the Fleet of Retribution.

"And how do you expect us to take over an entire carrier?"

"Well originally it was just going to be me" He eyed her armor and grabbed an orb from his supplies, sticking it to her chest plate. "Originally I was going to cloak the charges, giving myself more time before I had to detonate them, but seeing as how we're going to be in a Hanger full of Jiralhanae I can't let you run around without any active camouflage. You tap the center to activate it, it has a 10 minute timer on it before it needs to cool down and recharge."

"Alright, now how about the part where we kill the entire crew and single handedly pilot a Carrier, they didn't exactly teach us that in basic."

"If I told you that and they captured you then they could torture it out of you, best not to tell you for the safety of the mission."

With that he focused on the navigational system. "We are approaching the Jiralhanae line, starting up thrusters, there looks to be a formation returning to the Carrier."

Flying into the formation he broadcasted the codes that indicated him as a friendly, hoping they were still current. The lead Seraph wagged its wings in greeting, Then the radio buzzed. "This is squadron leader Julius, is that you Baccus?"

"Well" Kim said, "What do we do now?"

Fulsa' brought the head of the craft up and down, and then side to side.

"What does that..."

The radio interrupted her, "Ah, your communications unit is damaged, and by the looks of it so is the rest of your craft, when we dock land in the maintenance bay before you give me your report."

Fulsa' wagged his wings, indicating that he heard his instructions.

"Now, the carrier is full of maintenance shafts and tunnels, there is an access panel in the hanger. When we land and open the airlock this will go off, he indicated to a small canister above the pilot's seat. It's a concentrated supply of Jiralhanae scent, hopefully it will

mask our own. It's a very powerful concentration, they'll know somethings up when they smell it, but hopefully it will conceal our true numbers and distract them enough for us to slip through cloaked."

"And you know your way around these maintenance junctions?"

"We special operations warriors were forced to memorize every means of moving through this ship, in the slim off chance that we had to repel boarders. We will move through the shafts until we reach a ventilation duct, then move through it."

"Were are we taking this ventilation duct to?"

"My old quarters."

"Why not head straight to the bridge?"

"You'll see, now quite, we are about to land."

As the squadron approached the _Shadow of Intent_, a section of its compartmentalized shields aloud the fighters to gain entrance, once the outter shields reformed oxygen was pumped in and they procedded through the second hanger shields. Breaking off from the group Fulsa' hovered along the expanse of the hanger, it was quite large, work crews moving to and fro repairing vehicles and surveying others. "_These traitorous apes don't know what's coming_".

Landing the Seraph on the designated pad, Fulsa set the timer on the charges and warped his finger around the canisters pulltap. Kim checked her weapons and put her helmet back on, turning towards the door she looked down when she felt four fingers intertwine in her hand.

"Wha..?"

"Don't flatter yourself Human. The Jiralhanae work crew are approaching." he said as he pulled the tab, the air becoming heavy with the smell of Jiralhanae, it made Kim want to gag. "When we run you won't be able to see me and I don't think you know where your going" He activated his camouflage and turned hers on as a light appeared above the doorway turned green. The airlock slid open revealing a rather large Brute when Kim was pulled along past him. As they ran as fast as they could they heard a Brute scream.

"Intruders! Intruders in the hangar! Find them and kill them!

-0-0-0-

Alarms sounded as they ran towards the back of the hanger, jumping over work benches and zigzagging between Unggoy, when they reached the end Fulsa' opened the hatch to the mainenance shaft. "Hurry, get in before they see us!"

It was then that the Seraph exploded, distracting the Jiralanae. The energy from the explosion touched off the exposed power cells from another fighter setting of a chain reaction.

Sealing the hatch Fulsa' engaged the the shield encase the hanger became compromised. De-cloaking he scrambled up the ladder, Kim chuckled.

"What is so funny?"

"The way you climb up a ladder, I can tell your legs aren't made for it."

"These weren't built for Sangheili to move through, but one learns fast enough." He opened the sealed hatch above them and climbed through into a low hallway, it was maybe four feet by four feet, definitely not built for them. Fulsa' helped Kim up through the hatch and began crawling towards an intersection.

"Well turn here and continue onwards, well have to move through several more paths before we reach the ventilation duct we need to get through."

Making there way to the last hall Kim detected motion in the gloom, pulling out her gun she took aim when Fulsa's hand came down on it.

"Hold your fire! It's a Huragok!"

"What do I care what it i.."

"Shut up!" He motioned towards the creature giving off a low click. The creature floated over towards them, Fulsa' raised his hand towards his center and began to sign.

The Engineer responded, but Fulsa' couldn't follow, making a quick sign towards it the creature repeated itself more slowly.

Kim watched this exchange in silence, "_Why is he talking to this thing? It's been working for Brutes hasn't it?"_

The creature gave out several chirps before floating down the corridor. "You wanna tell me what that was about and how you can even communicate with it?"

"It was... difficult for me to learn the layouts of this system at first, one day I took it upon myself to learn some basic Huragok sign, after getting a little bit of a grasp on it I began asking them for directions whenever I saw them move through the system, these were built for them after all. Over time and practice I was able to carry on a little bit of conversation and more complicated concepts. I'm still not very good at it, it's a very complicated language and my lower voice can't even begin to make there vocalizations but I can get the point across with some patience."

"At any rate" he continued. "I told it that we were going to vent the atmosphere to kill the Jiralhanae and that they should all move into the engine room were we will keep the atmosphere."

"Why did you tell them your plan! Why didn't we kill something that is obviously working for the Brutes?"

"Because they are Huragok." a look of confusion forming on his face.

"That doesn't explain anything."

"How do I put this, Huragok exist to fix and build, they care nothing for sides. If you and I were tearing each other apart and a Huragok were to pass by, it would just as likely try and repair your armor as it would mine. They are sentient yes, and if you harm them they will defend itself or it's friends, but they are pacifistic in nature. Killing a Huragok is like killing someone who doesn't know any better... Ah, here we are."

Fulsa' worked a latch and opened the ventilation system up. They crawled around for what seemed like an hour before Fulsa' stopped.

"Here we are, home sweet home."

"_Where did he learn that expression from_?" Now that Kim thought about it Fulsa' seemed to know a lot of Human mannerisms, little phrases and gestures. She originally thought he picked them up from her and the other humans on board but some things didn't add up. He used them perfectly, always in proper context, it was like he was raised Human in that respect, someone who just learned them was sure to use them inappropriately at some point.

Dropping down to the ground Kim surveyed the quarters as Fulsa' made sure the door was locked.

It was small and mostly bare but it definitely had been inhabited. "So why did you take me to your bedroom? I hope you know I'm not that kind of girl."

"Ha, Ha, Ha, I can barely contain myself." Feeling along the groove in the edge of the wall he pulled out a cylinder.

Putting it down on the cot next to Kim he knelled before it and activated it.

A beam of light shone from the top as a hologram began to form. The light swirled until it solidified into the form of a human woman, wearing a skirt and jacket, hair in a bun and horn rimmed glasses.

"Hello Fulsa' your late for your lesson, and you brought a... Spartan." The AI twitched its eyebrow and smirked, "Oh this just looks bad."

And with that it began to laugh.

End
file.